

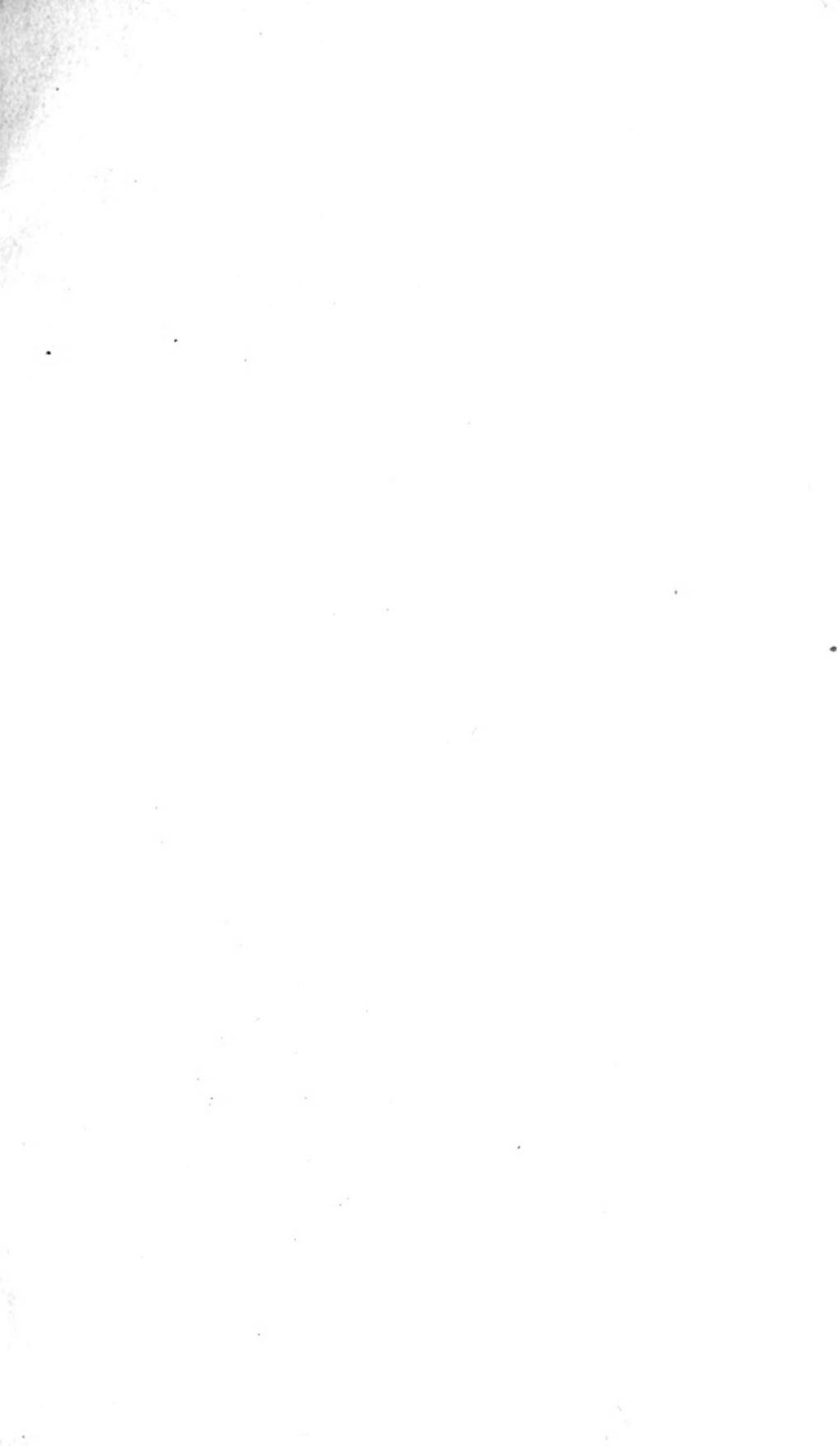
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PHILIP AUGUSTUS;

OR,

THE BROTHERS IN ARMS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DARNLEY," "DE L'ORME,"
&c.

George Payne Rainsford James

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."—HENRY IV.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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PHILIP AUGUSTUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE Count d'Auvergne left Agnes de Meranie, with his mind stretched to the highest point of excitement. For months and months he had been dwelling on the thoughts of that one moment. In the midst of other scenes and circumstances, his soul had been abstracted and busy with the anticipations of that hour. His whole powers and energies had been wrought up to bear it firmly and calmly. And now he had accomplished his task. It was done! he had seen, he had met the object of his young,

deep, all absorbing affection—the object of all his regrets, the undesigning cause of all his misery,—he had seen her the wife of another,—he had seen her in sorrow and distress,—he had helped even to tear her heart, by pressing on her a separation from the man she loved. He had marked every touch of her strong affection for Philip. He had felt every cold and chilling word she had addressed to himself, and yet he had borne it calmly,—firmly, at least. Like the Indian savage, he had endured the fire and the torture without a sign of suffering ; but still the fire and the torture had done their work upon his corporeal frame.

The words in the letter, presented to him by De Coucy's page, swam dizzily before his eyes, without conveying their defined meaning to his senses. He saw that it was some new pang,—he saw that it was some fresh misfortune; but Reason reeled upon her throne, and he could not sufficiently fix his mind to gather what was the precise nature of the tidings he received.

He bade the page follow, however, in a hurried and confused tone, and passed rapidly on through the castle hall into the town, and to the lodging where he had left his retainers. His horse stood saddled in the court, and all seemed prepared for departure ; and without well knowing why, but with the mere indistinct desire of flying from the sorrows that pursued him, he mounted his horse and turned him to the road.

“ Shall we follow, my Lord ? ” demanded his Squire, running at his bridle as he rode forward.

“ Ha ?—Yes !—Follow ! ” replied the Count, and galloped on with the letter the page had given him, still in his hand. He rode on with the swiftness of the wind ; whenever his horse made the least pause, urging him forward with the spur, as if a moment’s cessation of his rapid pace gave him up again to the dark and gloomy thoughts that pursued him like fierce and winged fiends.

Still, his long habit of commanding his feel-

ings struggled for its ancient power. He felt that his mind was overcome, and he strove to raise it up again. He endeavoured to recall his stoical firmness ; he tried to reason upon his own weakness ; but the object to which he had bent all his thoughts was accomplished,—the motive for his endurance was over, his firmness was gone, and Reason hovered vaguely round each subject that was presented to her, without grasping it decidedly. During the last two years, he had raised up, as it were, a strong embankment in his own mind against the flood of his sorrows, he had fortified it with every power of a firm and vigorous intellect ; but the flood had swelled by degrees, till its force became resistless ; and now, it bore away every barrier, with destruction the more fearful from the opposition it had encountered.

He rode on. The day was burning and oppressive. The hot mid-day sun struck scorching on his brow, and his eyes became wild and bloodshot ; but still he rode on, as if he felt in

no degree, what passed without the dark chamber of his own bosom. De Coucy's page had hastened for his horse when he found the Count about to depart, and had galloped after. Seeing now that his thoughts were apparently occupied in other matter, and that he held the letter he had received, crushed together in his hand, Ermold de Marcy made bold to spur forward his weary beast, and approaching D'Auvergne to say, "Is there any hope, my Lord, of your being able, in this matter, to relieve Sir Guy?"

"Sir Guy!" cried D'Auvergne, suddenly checking his horse in full career, and gazing in the page's face with an anxious thoughtful look, as if he strove with effort to recollect his ideas, and fix them on the subject brought before him,—"Sir Guy! What of Sir Guy?—Who is Sir Guy?"

"Do you not remember me, beau Sire?" asked the Page, astonished at the wild, unsettled look of a man whose fixed, stern, immoveable

coldness of expression had often been a matter of wonder to the light volatile youth, whose own thoughts and feelings changed full fifty times a day,—“ do you not know me, beau Sire ?” he asked. “ I am Ermold de Marcy, the Page of Sir Guy de Coucy, who now lies in English bonds, as that letter informs you.”

“ De Coucy in bonds !” cried the Count, starting. Then, after gazing for a moment or two in the Page’s face, he added slowly, “ Ay ! —Yes !—True ! Some one told me of it before, methinks. In bonds ! I will march and deliver him !”

“ Alas ! my Lord !” answered the Page, “ all the powers in France would not deliver him by force. He is in the hands of the English army, full fifty thousand strong ; and it is only by paying his ransom, I may hope to see my noble Lord freed.”

“ You shall pay his ransom,” replied D’Auvergne,—“ yes, you shall pay his ransom. How much does the Soldan ask ?”

" 'Tis the English King who holds him, my Lord," answered the Page; " not the Soldan. We are in France, beau Sire, not in Palestine."

" Not in Palestine, Fool !" cried the Count, frowning as if the Page sought to mock him. " Feel I not the hot sun burning on my brow ? And yet," he continued, looking round, " I believe thou art right.—But the ransom, what does the Soldan require.—De Coucy ! — the noble De Coucy !—to think of his ever being a prisoner to those infidel Saracens ! What does the miscreant Soldan demand ?"

Surprised and shocked at what he beheld, the Page paused for a moment till D'Auvergne repeated his question. Then, however, seeing that it would be a vain attempt to change the current of the Count's thoughts, he replied, " I do not know, my Lord, precisely ; but I should suppose they would never free a knight of his renown under a ransom of ten thousand crowns."

“ Ten thousand crowns !” cried d’Auvergne, his mind getting more and more astray every moment, under the effort and excitement of conversation, “ thou shalt have double ! Then with the remainder thou shalt buy thee a flock of sheep, and find out some valley in the mountains, where nor man nor woman ever trod ; there shalt thou hide thee with thy sheep, till age whitens thee, and death strikes thee. Thou shalt ! thou shalt, I tell thee, that the records of the world may say there was once a man who lived and died in peace. But come to Jerusalem ! Come ! and thou shalt have the gold. For me, I am bound by a holy vow to do penance in solitude amongst the green woods of Mount Libanus. Follow quick ! follow ! and thou shalt have the gold.”

So saying, the Count rode on, and Ermold de Marcy followed with his train ; speaking earnestly, though not very sagely perhaps, with d’Auvergne’s chief squire, concerning the sudden fit of insanity that had seized his lord.

Notwithstanding the strange turn which the mind of Count Thibalt had taken, he mistook not his road to Paris, nor did he once err in the various turnings of the city. On the contrary, with a faculty sometimes possessed by madness, he seemed to proceed with more readiness than usual, following all the shortest and most direct streets towards the house of the canons of St. Berthe's; where, on his arrival, he went straight to the apartments which had been assigned to him by the good Fathers; and calling for his treasurer, whom he had left behind on his visit to Compiègne, he demanded the key of his treasure.

The case which contained the sums he had destined to defray the expenses of his return to the Holy Land, was soon laid open before him. For a moment or two, he gazed from it to the Page, with one of those painful wandering looks of a mind partially gone, striving vainly to collect all its remaining energies and concentrate them on some matter of deep and vital import.

“Take it!” cried he at length, — “take what is necessary.—Tell thy Lord,” he added with great effort, as if the linking each idea to the other was a work of bitter labour,— “tell thy Lord, I would come—I would strive to free myself—I would do much.—But, but — Auvergne is not what he was. My heart is the same—but my brain, youth! my brain!”—and he carried his hand to his brow, wandering over it with his fingers, while his eyes fixed gradually on vacancy; and he continued muttering broken sentences to himself, such as, “This morning!—ay! this morning!—The hot sun of the Desert.—And Agnes—yes, Agnes,—her cold words.” Then suddenly catching the eye of the Page fixed upon his countenance, he pointed to the gold, exclaiming angrily, “Take it! Why dost thou not take it?—Get thee gone with it to thy Lord. Dost thou stay to mock. Take the gold and get thee gone, I say!”

The Page, without further bidding, kneeled beside the case, and took thence as many bags

of gold as he thought necessary for the purpose of ransoming De Coucy ; placing them one by one in his pouch. When he had done, he paused a moment for licence to depart, which was soon given in an angry “ Get thee gone !” and, descending the stairs as quickly as possible, he only stayed with the servants of the Count d’Auvergne, to bid them have a care of their Lord ; for that, to a certainty, he was as mad as a Marabout ; after which, he mounted his horse and rode away.

Ermold de Marcy first turned the head of his weary beast towards the east ; but no sooner was he out of Paris, than he changed that direction for one nearly west ; and, without exactly retreading his steps, he took quite an opposite path to that which he first intended. This retrograde movement proceeded from no concerted purpose, but was, in reality and truth, a complete change of intention ; for, to say sooth, the poor Page was not a little embarrassed with the business he had in hand.

“ Here,” thought he, “ I have about me

twelve thousand crowns in gold. The roads are full of Cotereaux, Routiers, and robbers of all descriptions ; my horse is so weary, that if I am attacked, I must e'en stand still and be plundered. Night is coming on fast ; and I have no where to lie—and what to do, I know not. If I carry all this gold about with me too, till I find my master, I shall lose it, by Saint Jude ! By the holy rood ! I will go to the old Hermit of Vincennes. He cheated me, and proved himself a true man, after all, about that ring. So I will leave the gold under his charge till I have learned more of my Lord, and to whom he has surrendered himself."

This resolution was formed just as he got out of the gate of the city ; and skirting round on the outside, he took his way towards the tower of Vincennes ; after passing which, he soon reached the dwelling of the Hermit in the forest of Saint Mandé, with but little difficulty in finding his road. The old man received him with somewhat more urbanity than

usual, and heard his tale in calm silence. Ermold related circumstantially all that had occurred to him since he followed his Lord from Paris, looking upon the Hermit in the light of a confessor, and relieving his bosom of the load that had weighed upon it ever since his truant escapade to the good town of La Flêche. He told too all the efforts he had made to avert the unhappy effects of Jodelle's treachery ; and pourtrayed, with an air of bitter mortification, that interested the old man in his favour, the degree of despair he had felt when, on mounting the hill above Mirebeau, he saw the English army in possession of the city and country round about.

“ And saw you no one who had escaped ? ” demanded the Anchorite, with some earnestness.

“ No one,” replied the Page, “ but our own mad juggler, Gallon the Fool, who had got away, though sore wounded with an arrow. From him, however, I learned nothing, for he was so cursed with the pain of his wound, that

he would speak no sense ; and when I questioned him sharply, he shouted like a devil, as is his wont, and ran off as hard as he could. I then rode forward to Tours,” continued the Page, “and for a crown, got a holy clerk to write me a letter to the Count d’Auvergne, in case I could not have speech of him, telling him of my Lord’s case, and praying his help ; and never did I doubt that the noble Count would instantly go down to Tours himself, to ransom his brother-in-arms ; but, God help us all ! I found his wit a cup-full weaker than when I left him.”

“ How so ? ” demanded the Hermit : “ what wouldest thou say, boy ? Why did not the good Count go ? Speak more plainly.”

“ Alas ! good Father, he is as mad as the moon ! ” replied the Page ; “ something that happened this morning at Compiègne, his followers say, must have been the cause, for yesterday he was as wise and calm as ever. To-day too, when he rose, he was gloomy and

stern, they tell me, as he always is ; but when he came back from the château, he was as mad as a Saracen santon."

The Hermit clasped his hands, and knit his brows ; and after thinking deeply for several minutes, he said, apparently more as a corollary to his own thoughts, than to the Page's words, " Thus we should learn, never for any object, though it may seem good, to quit the broad and open path of truth. That word policy has caused, and will cause, more misery in the world, than all the plagues of Egypt. I abjure it, and henceforth will never yield a word's approval to aught that has even a touch of falsehood, be it but in seeming. Never deceive any one, youth ! even to their own good, as thou mayest think ; for thou knowest not what little circumstance may intervene, unknown to thee, and, scattering all the good designs of the matter to the wind, may leave the deceit alone, to act deep and mischievously. A grain of sand in the tubes of a clepsydra will derange

all its functions, and throw its manifold and complicated movements wrong. How much more likely then, that some little unforeseen accident in the intricate workings of this great earthly machine should prove our best calculations false, and whip us with our own policy ! Oh never, never deceive ! Deceit in itself is evil, and intention can never make it good."

Though like most people, who, when they discover an error in their own conduct, take care to sermonize some other person thereupon, the Hermit addressed his discourse to Ermold de Marcy : his homily was in fact a reproach to himself; for, in the Page's account of the Count d'Auvergne's madness, he read, though mistakenly, the effects of the scheme he had sanctioned, as we have seen, for freeing the country from the interdict. For a moment or two, he still continued to think over what he had heard, inflicting on himself that sort of bitter castigation, which his stern mind was as much accustomed to address to himself, as to

others. He then turned again to the subject of De Coucy. "'Tis an unhappy accident, thou hast told me there, youth," he said, coming suddenly back, upon the subject, without any immediate connexion ;—"'tis an unhappy accident,—both your lord being taken, and his brother-in-arms being unable to aid him ; but we must see for means to gain his ransom, and, God willing ! it shall be done."

"'Tis done already, Father Hermit," replied the Page : "the noble Count had not lost his love for Sir Guy, though he had lost his own senses ; and albeit he was in no state to manage the matter of the ransom himself, he gave me sufficient money. It lies there in that pouch, twelve thousand crowns, all in gold. Now, I dare not be riding about with such a sum ; and so I have brought it to you to keep safe, while I go back and find out the Earl of Salisbury, who, I have heard say, was an old companion of my master's in the Holy Land, and will tell me, for his love, into whose hands he has fallen.

I will now lead my beast back to the village, by Vincennes, for carry me he can no farther ; and, though I could stretch me here in your hut for the night, no stable is near, and my poor bay would be eaten by the wolves before day-break. To-morrow, with the first ray of the morning, I set out to seek my Lord, and find means of freeing him. 'Tis a long journey, and may be a long treaty. Give me, therefore, two months to accomplish it all ; and if I come not then, think that the Routiers have devoured me ; and send, I pray thee, good Father, to King Philip, and bid him see my Lord ransomed."

"Stay, boy," said the Hermit : "you must not go alone. To-morrow morning, speed to Paris ; seek Sir François de Roussy, Mountjoy King-at-arms ; tell him I sent thee. Show him thy lord's case, and bid him give thee a herald to accompany thee on thine errand. Thus shalt thou do it far quicker, and far more surely ; and the herald's guerdon shall not be wanting when he returns."

The Page eagerly caught at the idea, and the farther arrangements between himself and the hermit were easily made. After having yielded a few of its gold pieces, to defray the expenses of the Page's journey, the pouch, with the money it contained, was safely deposited under the moss and straw of the hermit's bed ; which place, as we have seen, had already on one occasion, served a similar purpose. Ermold de Marcy then received the old man's blessing, and bidding him adieu, left him to contemplate more at leisure the news he had so suddenly brought him.

It was then, when freed from the immediate subject of De Coucy's imprisonment, which the presence of the Page had of course rendered the first subject of consideration, that the mind of the Hermit turned to the unhappy fate of Arthur Plantagenet. He paused for several moments, with his arms folded on his chest, drawing manifold sad deductions from that unhappy Prince's claim to the crown of England,

joined with his present situation, and his uncle's established cruelty. There were hopes that the English barons might interfere, or that shame and fear might lead John to hold his unscrupulous hand. But yet the chance was a frail one ; and as the old man contemplated the reverse, he gave an involuntary shudder, and sinking on his knees before the crucifix, he addressed a silent prayer to Heaven, for protection to the unfortunate beings exposed to the cruel ambition of the weak and remorseless tyrant.

CHAPTER II.

THERE stood in ancient days, on the banks of the river Seine, a tall strong tower, forming one of the extreme defences of the city of Rouen towards the water. It has long, long been pulled down ; but I have myself seen a picture of that capital of Normandy, taken while the tower I speak of yet stood ; and, though the painter had indeed represented it as crumbling and dilapidated, even in his day, there was still an air of menacing gloom in its aspect, that seemed to speak it a place whose dungeons might have chronicled many a misery—a place of long sorrows and of ruthless deeds.

In this tower, some four months after the

events which we have recorded in the end of the last volume and the beginning of this, were confined two persons of whom we have already spoken much—Arthur Plantagenet and Guy de Coucy.

The chamber that they inhabited was not one calculated either to raise the spirits of a prisoner by its lightsome airiness, or to awaken his regrets by the prospect of the free world without. It seemed as if made for the purpose of striking gloom and terror into the bosoms of its sad inhabitants ; and strong must have been the heart that could long bear up under the depressing influence of its heavy atmosphere.

Its best recommendation was its spaciousness, being a square of near thirty feet in length and breadth ; but this advantage was almost completely done away by the depression of the roof, the highest extent of which, at the apex of the arches whereof it was composed, was not above eight feet from the floor. In the centre

rose a short column of about two feet in diameter, from which, at the height of little more than a yard from the ground, began to spring the segments of masonry forming the low but pointed arches of the vault.

Window there was none; but at the highest part, through the solid bend of one of the arches, was pierced a narrow slit, or loop-hole, admitting sufficient light into the chamber to render the objects dimly visible, but nothing more.

The furniture which this abode of wretchedness contained was as scanty as could well be, though a pretence of superior comfort had been given to it over the other dungeons, when it was about to be tenanted by a prince. Thus, in one part was a pile of straw, on which De Coucy made his couch; and in another corner was a somewhat better bed, with two coverings of tapestry, placed there for the use of Arthur. There were also two settles—an unknown luxury in prisons of that day, and by the

massy column in the centre stood a small oaken table.

At the side of this last piece of furniture, with his arms stretched thereon, and his face buried in his arms, sat Arthur Plantagenet. It was apparently one of those fine sunny days that sometimes break into February ; and a bright ray of light found its way through the narrow loophole we have mentioned, and fell upon the stooping form of the unhappy boy, exposing the worn and soiled condition of his once splendid apparel, and the confused dishevelled state of the rich, curling, yellow hair, which fell in glossy disarray over his fair cheeks, as his brow rested heavily upon his arms. The ray passed on, and, forming a long narrow line of light upon the pillar, displayed a rusty ring of iron, with its stauncheon deeply imbedded in the stone. Attached to this, hung several links of a broken chain ; but though the unhappy Prince, when he looked upon the manacles that had been inflicted on some former

tenant of the prison, might have found that comparative consolation which we derive from the knowledge of greater misery than our own ; yet the other painful associations called up by the sight, more than counterbalanced any sooth-ing comparisons it suggested ; and he seemed, in despair, to be hiding his eyes from all and every thing, in a scene where each object he looked upon, called up fresh some regret for the past, or some dread for the future.

A little beyond, in a leaning position, with his hand grasping one of the groins of the arch, stood De Coucy, in the dim half-light that filled every part of the chamber, where that ray already mentioned fell not immediately ; and with a look of deep mournful interest, he contemplated his young fellow-captive, whose fate seemed to affect him even more than his own.

During the first few days of their captivity, all the prisoners taken at Mirebeau had been treated by the crafty John with kindness and even distinction ; more especially Arthur and

De Coucy, at least while William Longsword, the Earl of Pembroke, and some others of the more independent of the English nobility, remained near the person of the King. While this lasted, the youthful mind of Arthur Plantagenet recovered in some degree its tone, though the fatal events of Mirebeau had at first sunk it almost to despair.

On one pretence or another, however, John soon contrived that all those who might have obstructed his schemes, either by opposition or remonstrance, should be despatched on distant and tedious expeditions; and, free from the restraint of their presence, his real feelings towards Arthur and those who supported him, were not long in displaying themselves.

Though ungifted with that fine quality which, teaching us to judge and direct our own conduct as well as to understand and govern that of others, truly deserves the name of *wisdom*, John possessed that knowledge of human nature,—that cunning science in man's

weaknesses, which is too often mistaken for wisdom. He well understood, therefore, that the good and noble—even in an age when virtue was chivalrous, and when the protection of the oppressed was a deed of fame—would often suffer violence and cruelty to pass unnoticed, after time had taken the first hard aspect from the deed. He knew that what would raise a thousand voices against it to-day, would to-morrow be canvassed in a whisper, and the following day forgotten: and he judged that, though the first rumour of his severity towards his nephew, might for a moment wake the indignation of his barons, yet, long before they were reunited on the scene of action, individual interests, and newer events would step in, and divert their thoughts to very different channels.

Lord Pembroke was consequently despatched to Guyenne, with several of those unmanageable honest men, whose straightforward honour is the stumbling block of evil intentions. Lord

Salisbury was left once more to protect Touraine with very inefficient forces ; and John himself, retreated across the Loire with the prisoners, and the bulk of his army.

Each day's march changed his demeanor towards Arthur and his unfortunate companions. His kingly courtesy became gradually scanty kindness, manifest neglect, and, at last, cruel ill usage. The revolted nobles of Poitou had given quite sufficient excuse for the King's severity, towards them, at least ; and with little ceremony, either of time or manner, they were consigned to separate prisons, scattered over the face of Maine and Brittany. Arthur and De Coucy were granted a few days more of comparative liberty, following the English army, strongly escorted indeed ; but still breathing the free air, and enjoying the sight of fair Nature's face. At length, as the army passed through Normandy, their escort, already furnished with instructions to that effect, turned from the line of march, and deposited them within the walls

of the castle of Falaise; from which place they were removed to Rouen in the midst of the winter, and confined in the chamber we have already described.

Arthur's mind had borne up at Falaise; so far, at least, that, though he grieved over the breaking of his first splendid hopes, and felt, with all the eager restlessness of youth, the uncomorts of imprisonment, the privation of exercise, the dull monotonous round of daily hours, the want of novelty, and the wearisome continuity of one unchanging train of thought; yet hope was still alive—nay, even expectation; and ceaselessly would he build those blessed castles in the air, that, like the portrait of an absent friend, picture forth the sweet features of distant happiness, far away, but not lost for ever. The air of the prison had there been fresh and light, the governor mild and urbane; and, though there, he had been lodged in a different chamber from De Coucy, yet his spirits had not sunk, even under solitude.

At Rouen, however, though the jailer, for his own convenience, rather than their comfort, placed the two prisoners in the same apartment, Arthur's cheerfulness quickly abandoned him ; his health failed, and his hopes and expectations passed away, like dreams as they were. The air, though cold, was close and heavy ; and the dim, grey light of the chamber seemed to encourage every melancholy thought.

When De Coucy strove to console him, he would but shake his head with an impatient start, as if the very idea of better days was but a mockery of his hopelessness ; and at other times he would sit, with the silent tears of anguish and despair chasing each other down his fair, pale cheeks, hour after hour ; as if weeping had become his occupation. As one day followed another, his depression seemed to increase. The only sign of interest he had shown in what was passing in the busy world without, had been the questions which he asked the jailer, morning and evening, when their food

or a light was brought them. Then, he had been accustomed anxiously to demand when his uncle John was expected to return from England, and sometimes to comment on the reply ; but, after a while, this too ceased, and his whole energies seemed benumbed with despair, from the rising till the setting of the sun.

After it was down, however, he seemed in a degree to re-awaken ; and then alone he showed an interest in any thing unconnected with his own immediate fate, when the day had gone, and by the light of the lamp that was given them at night, De Coucy would relate to him many a battle and adventure in the Holy Land —scenes of danger, and terror, and excitement ; and deeds of valour, and strength, and generosity, all lighted up with the romantic and chivalrous spirit of the age, and tinged with that wild and visionary superstition which cast a vague sort of shadowy grandeur over all the tales of those days.

Then Arthur's cheek would glow with a flush

of feverish interest ; and he would ask many an eager question, and listen to long and minute descriptions, that would weary beyond all patience any modern ears ; and, in the end, he would wish that, instead of having embarked his hopes in the fatal endeavour of recovering lost kingdoms, and wresting his heritage from the usurper, he had given his life and hopes to the recovery of Christ's blessed cross and sepulchre.

This, however, was only, as we have said, after the sun had gone down, and when the lamp was lighted ; for it seemed that then, when the same darkness was apportioned to every one, and when every one sought a refuge within the walls of their dwellings, that he felt not his imprisonment so painfully as when day had risen—*day*, which to him was without any of day's enjoyments. *He* could not taste the fresh air — *he* could not catch the sunshine of the early spring — *he* could not stretch his enfeebled limbs in the sports of the morning — *he* could

not gaze upon all the unrivalled workmanship of God's glorious, beauty-spreading hand. Day-light to him was all privation ; and even the sun-beam that found its way through the loop-hole in the masonry, seemed but given to wring him with the memory of sweets he could not taste. He thus therefore turned his back towards it, as we have at first depicted him ; and burying his eyes upon his arms, gave himself up to the recollection of broken hopes, long gone visions of empire and dominion, stifled aspirations after honour and fame, brilliant past schemes of justice and equity, and universal benevolence, and all those bright materials given to youth, out of which manhood preserves so few to carry on into old age. Powerful feelings and generous designs are, alas ! too like the inheritance of a miser in the hands of some spendthrift heir—lavished away on trifles in our early years, and needed, but not possessed, in our riper age.

None had been more endowed in such sort

than Arthur Plantagenet ; but it seemed the will of Fortune, to snatch from him, piece by piece, each portion of his heritage, and to crush the energies of his mind at the same time that she tore from him his right of dominion ; and thus, while he lay and pondered over all he had once hoped, there was a touch of bitterness mingled with his grief, to feel that the noblest wishes are but the mock and sport of Fate. Born to a kingdom, yet doomed to a prison ; as a child he had entered on the career of a man ; he had mingled the bright aspirations of youth with the ambitious yearnings of maturity ; and now his infancy lay crushed under the misfortunes of manhood.

De Coucy gazed on him with feelings of deep and painful interest. What he might have been, and what he was ; his youth, and his calamities ; his crushed mind, and its former gallant energy, stood forth in strong contrast to the eyes of De Coucy, as, leaning against the arch, he contemplated the unhappy Prince, whose

thin, pale hands, appearing from beneath the curls of his glossy hair, spoke plainly the ravages that confinement and sorrow had worked upon him.

The Knight was about to speak, when the sounds of voices approaching were heard through the low small door that opened from their chamber upon a stone gallery at the head of the staircase. De Coucy listened.

“Thou art bold!—thou art too bold!” cried one of the speakers, pausing opposite the door. “Tell not me of other prisoners! Thine orders were strict, that he should be kept alone.—What was’t to thee, if that mad De Coucy had rotted with fifty others in a cell! Thy charge is taken from thee. Speak not! but begone! Leave me thy keys.—Thou, Humbert, stand by with thy men. Listen not; but if I call, rush in. Mark me, dost thou? If I speak loud, rush in!”

The bolts were withdrawn, the key turned, and, the door opening, John, King of England,

entered, stooping his head to pass the low arch of the door-way. Arthur had looked up at the first sound, and his pale cheek had become a hue paler, even before the appearance of his uncle ; but, when John did at length approach, a quick, sharp shudder passed over his nephew's form, as if there had been indeed some innate antipathy, which warned the victim that he was in presence of him destined to be his murderer.

The King advanced a step or two into the chamber, and then paused, regarding Arthur, who had risen from his seat, with a cold and calculating eye. A slight smile of gratification passed over his lip, as he remarked the sallow and emaciated state to which imprisonment and despair had reduced a form, but three short months before, full of life, and strength, and beauty.

The smile passed away instantly from a face little accustomed to express the real feelings of the heart ; but John still continued for a mo-

ment to contemplate his nephew, evidently little pained at the sight of the change he beheld, whether from that change he augured sufficient depression of mind to second his purpose of wringing from his nephew the cession of his claims, or whether he hoped that sickness might prove as good an auxiliary as murder, and spare him bloodshed, that would inevitably be accompanied by danger, as well as reproach. His eye then glanced through the sombre arches of the vault, till it rested on De Coucy with a sort of measuring fixedness, as if he sought to ascertain the exact space between himself and the Knight.

Satisfied on this point, he turned again to Arthur.

“ Well, fair nephew,” said he, with that kind of irony which he seldom banished from his lips, “ for three years I asked you, in vain, to honour my poor court with your noble presence. You have come at last, and doubtless the reception I have given you is such, that

you will never think of departing from a place where you may be hospitably entertained for life. How love you prison walls, fair nephew?"

Arthur replied not; but, casting himself again upon the settle, covered his eyes as before, and seemed, from the quick rise and fall of his shoulders, to weep bitterly.

"Sir King," said De Coucy, interposing indignantly, "thou art, then, even more cruel than report gives thee out. Must thou needs add the torture of thy words to the tyranny of thine actions. In the name of God! bad man, leave this place of wretchedness, and give thy nephew, at least, such tranquillity as a prison may afford."

"Ha! beau Sire de Coucy," cried John with an unaltered tone. "Methinks thou art that gallant knight who proclaimed Arthur Plantagenet King of England in the heart of Mirebeau. His kingdom is a goodly one," he continued, looking round the chamber, "gay and extensive is it! He has to thank thee much for

it!—Let me tell thee, Sir Knight,” he added, raising his voice and knitting his brow, “to the bad counsels of thee, and such as thee, Arthur Plantagenet owes all his sorrows and captivity. Ye have poisoned his ear against his kindred; ye have raised up in him ambitious thoughts that become him not; ye have taught him to think himself a king; and ye have cast him down from a prince to a prisoner.”

John spoke loudly and angrily, and at the sound the door of the vault was pushed open, showing the form of a man-at-arms about to enter, followed by several others. But the King waved them back with his hand, and turning to Arthur, he proceeded:—“Hearken to me, nephew! The way to free yourself, and to return to the bright world from which you are now cut off, is free and open before you.” *

Arthur raised his head.

* This conversation is reported by the chroniclers of the time to have taken place previous to Arthur’s confinement in the Tower of Rouen.

“Renounce your claim to kingdoms you shall never possess, and cast from you expectations you never can realise, and you shall be free to-morrow. I will restore to you your duchy of Brittany; I will give you a portion befitting a Plantagenet; and I will treat you kindly as my brother’s son. What would you more? You shall have the friendship and protection of the King of England.”

“I would rather have the enmity of the King of France,” cried Arthur, starting up, as the long catalogue of all John’s base perfidies rushed across his mind, coupled with the offer of his friendship—“I would rather have the enmity of the King of France! There is always some resource in the generosity of a true knight.”

“Thou art a fool, stubborn boy!” cried John, his eye flashing, and his lip curling at his nephew’s bold reply—“thou art a stubborn fool! Are not the Kings of France the hereditary enemies of our race?”

“Philip of France is my godfather in chi-

valry," replied Arthur, drawing somewhat nearer to De Coucy, as if for protection from the wrath that was gathering on his uncle's brow, "and I would rather place my confidence in him, than in one who wronged my uncle Richard, who wronged my father Geoffrey, and who has broken his word even in respect to me, by thrusting me into a prison, when he promised his barons, as they themselves have told me, to leave me at liberty and to treat me well. He that breaks his word is no good knight, and I tell thee, John of Anjou, thou art false and forsown!"

John lost his habitual command over his countenance in the excess of his wrath; and his features seemed actually to change under the vehemence of his passion. He set his teeth; he clenched his left-hand, as if he would have buried his finger-nails in the palm; and, thrusting his right under his crimson mantle, he evidently drew some weapon from its sheath. But at that moment, De Coucy, taking one stride in

advance, opposed himself between the King and his nephew, and with his head thrown back, and his broad chest displayed, prepared at all risks to seize the tyrant, and dash him to atoms if he offered any violence to the unhappy youth that fortune had cast into his power.

John, however, possessed not the heart, even had he been armed in proof, to encounter a knight like De Coucy, though unarmed ; and, sheathing again his dagger, he somewhat smoothed his look.

“By St. Paul !” he cried, taking pains, however, not to affect coolness too suddenly, lest the rapidity of the transition should betray its falseness, but carefully letting his anger appear to be slow in subsiding—“ by St. Paul ! Arthur Plantagenet, thou wilt drive me mad ! Wert thou not my brother’s son, I would strike thee with my dagger ! I came to thee, to give thee liberty, if this taste of imprisonment had taught thee to yield thy empty pretensions to a crown thou canst never win ; and thou meetest

me with abuse and insult. The consequences be on thine own head, minion. I have dungeons deeper than this, and chains that may weigh somewhat heavy on those frail limbs!"

"Neither dungeons nor chains," replied the gallant boy firmly, "no, nor death itself, shall make me renounce my rights of birth! You judge me cowardly, by the tears I shed but now; but I tell thee, that though I be worn with this close prison, and broken by sorrow, I fear not to meet death, rather than yield what I am bound in honour to maintain. England, Anjou, Guyenne, Touraine, are mine in right of my father; Brittany comes to me from my mother, its heiress; and, even in the grave, my bones shall claim the land, and my tomb proclaim thee an usurper!"

"Ha!" said John, "ha!" and there was a sneering accent on the last monosyllable that was but too fatally explained afterwards. "Be it as thou wilt, fair nephew," he added with a smile of dark and bitter meaning—"be it as

thou wilt ;” and he was turning to leave the apartment.

“ Hold, Sir, yet one moment !” cried De Coucy. “ One word on my account. When I yielded my sword to William of Salisbury, your noble brother, it was under the express promise that I should be treated well and knightly ; and he was bound, in delivering me to you, to make the same stipulation in my behalf. If he did do it, you have broken your word. If he did not do it, he has broken his ; and one or other I will proclaim a false traitor, in every court of Europe.”

John heard him to an end ; and then, after eyeing him from head to foot in silence, with an air of bitter triumphant contempt, he opened the door and passed out, without deigning to make the least reply. The door closed behind him — the heavy bolts were pushed forward — and Arthur and De Coucy once more stood alone, cut off from all the world.

The young captive gazed on his fellow-

prisoner for a moment or two, with a glance in which the agitation of a weakened frame and a depressed mind, might be traced struggling with a sense of dignity and firmness.

De Coucy endeavoured to console him; but the Prince raised his hand, with an imploring look, as if the very name of comfort were a mockery. “Have I acted well, Sir Knight?” he asked. “Have I spoken as became me?”

“Well, and nobly, have you acted, fair Prince,” replied De Coucy, “with courage, and dignity worthy your birth and station.”

“That is enough then!” said Arthur—“that is enough!” and, with a deep and painful sigh, he cast himself again upon the seat; and, once more burying his face on his arms, let the day flit by him without even a change of position.

In the mean while, De Coucy, with his arms folded on his breast, paced up and down the vaulted chamber, revolving thoughts nearly as bitter as those of his fellow-captive. Mirebeau

had proved as fatal to him as to Arthur. It had cast down his all. Arthur had struck for kingdoms, and he had struck for glory and fortune — the object of both, however, was happiness, though the means of the one was ambition ; and of the other, love. Both had cast their all upon the stake, and both had lost. He too had to mourn then the passing away of his last hopes—the bright dream of love, and all the gay and delightful fabrics that imagination had built up upon its fragile base. They had fallen in ruins round him ; and his heart sickened when he thought of all that a long captivity might effect in extinguishing the faint, faint glimmering of hope which yet shone upon his fate.

Thus passed the hours till night began to fall ; and all the various noises of the town, —the shouts of the boatmen on the river, the trampling of the horses in the streets, the busy buzz of many thousand tongues, the cries of the merchants in the highways, and the rustling

tread of all the passers to and fro, which during the day had risen in a confused hum to the chamber in which they were confined, died one by one away ; and nothing was at length heard but the rippling of the waters of the Seine, then at high tide, washing against the very foundations of the tower.

It was now the hour at which a lamp was usually brought them ; and Arthur raised his head, as if anxious for its coming.

“ Enguerand is late to-night,” said he, “ but I forgot. I heard my uncle discharge him from his office. Perhaps the new governor will not give us any light. Yet, hark ! I hear his footstep. He is lighting the lantern in the passage.”

He was apparently right, for steps approached, stopping twice for a moment or two, as if to fulfil some customary duty, and then coming nearer, they paused at the door of their prison. The bolts were withdrawn, and a stranger, bearing a lamp, presented himself. His face

was certainly not very prepossessing, but it was not strikingly otherwise ; and Arthur, who with a keen though timid eye scanned every line in his countenance, was beginning in some degree to felicitate himself on the change of his jailer, when the stranger turned and addressed him in a low and somewhat unsteady voice.

“ My Lord,” said he, “ you must follow me ; as I am ordered to give you a better apartment. The Sire de Coucy must remain here till the upper chamber is prepared.”

Fear instantly seized upon Arthur. “ I will not leave him,” cried he, running round the pillar, and clinging to De Coucy’s arm. “ This chamber is good enough ; I want no other.”

“ Your hand is not steady, sirrah !” said De Coucy, taking the lamp from the man, and holding it to his pale face. “ Your lip quivers, and your cheek is as blanched as a templar’s gown.”

“ ’Tis the shaking fever I caught in the

marshes by Du Clerc," replied the other; "but what has that to do with the business of Prince Arthur, beau Sire?"

"Because we doubt foul play, varlet," replied De Coucy, "and you speak not with the boldness of good intent."

"If any ill were designed, either to you or to the Prince," replied the man more boldly, "'twould be easily accomplished, without such ceremony. A flight of arrows, shot through your doorway, would leave you both as dead as the saints in their graves."

"That is true too!" answered De Coucy, looking to Arthur, who still clung close to his arm. "What say you, my Prince?"

"It matters little, what the Duke says, beau Sire," said the jailer, interposing, "for he *must* come. Several of the great barons have returned to the court sooner than the King expected; and he would not have them find Prince Arthur here, it seems. So, if he come not by fair means, I must e'en have up

the guard, and take him to his chamber by force."

"Ha!" said Arthur, somewhat loosening his hold of De Coucy's arm. "What barons are returned, sayest thou?"

"I know not well," said the jailer carelessly; "Lord Pembroke I saw go by, and I heard of good William with the Longsword; but I marked not the names of the others, though I was told them."

Arthur looked to De Coucy as if for advice. "Theague fit has marvellously soon passed," said the Knight, fixing his eyes sternly upon the stranger. "By the holy rood! if I thought that thou playedst us false, I would dash thy brains out against the wall!"

"I play you not false, Sir Knight," replied the man in an impatient tone.—"Come, my Lord," he continued to Arthur, "come quickly, for come you must. You will find some fresh apparel in the other chamber. To-morrow they talk of having you to the court; for these

proud lords, they say, murmur at your being kept here."

There was a vague suspicion of some treachery still rested on the mind of De Coucy. The man's story was probable. It was more than probable, it was very likely ; but yet the Knight did not believe it, he knew not why. On Arthur, however, it had its full effect. He was aware that Lord Pembroke, together with several of the greater barons of England, had wrung a promise for his safety, from King John, long before the relief of Mirebeau ; and he doubted not, that, to their remonstrance he owed this apparent intention to alleviate his imprisonment.

" I must leave you, I am afraid, beau Sire de Coucy," said the Prince. " I would fain stay here ; but, I fear me, it is vain to resist."

" I fear me so too," replied the Knight. " Farewell, my noble Prince ! We shall often think of each other, though separated. Farewell !"

De Coucy took the unhappy boy in his arms, and pressed him for a moment to his heart, as if he had been parting with a brother or a child. He could no way explain his feelings at that moment. They had long been companions in many of those bitter hours which endear people to each other, more perhaps than even hours of mutual happiness ; but there was something in his bosom beyond the pain of parting with a person whose fate had even thus been united with his own. He felt that he saw Arthur Plantagenet for the last time ; and he gave him, as it were, the embrace of the dying.

He would not, however, communicate his own apprehensions to the bosom of the Prince ; and, unfolding his arms, he watched him while, with a step still hesitating, he approached the door-way.

The jailer followed, and held open the door for him to pass out. Arthur, however, paused for a moment, and turned a timid glance towards De Coucy, as if there was some mis-doubting in his bosom too ; then, suddenly

passing his hand over his brow, as if to clear away irresolution, he passed the door-way.

The instant he entered the passage beyond, he stopped, exclaiming, “It is my uncle!” and turned to rush back into the cell; but before he could accomplish it, or De Coucy could start forward to assist him, the new jailer passed out, pushed the unhappy Prince from the threshold, and shutting the door, fastened it with bolt after bolt.

“Now, minion,” cried a voice without, which De Coucy could not doubt was that of King John, “wilt thou brave me as thou didst this morning! — Begone, slave!” he added, apparently speaking to the jailer; “quick! begone!” and then again turning to his nephew, he poured upon him a torrent of vehement and angry vituperation.

In that dark age such proceedings could have but one purpose, and De Coucy, comprehending them at once, glanced round the apartment in search of some weapon wherewith he might

force the door ; but it was in vain — nothing presented itself. The door was cased with iron, and the strength of Hercules would not have torn it from its hinges. Glaring then like a lion in a cage, the Knight stood before it, listening for what was to follow,—doubting not for a moment the fearful object of the bad and blood-thirsty Monarch,—his heart swelling with indignation and horror, and yet perfectly impotent to prevent the crime that he knew was about to be perpetrated.

“ John of Anjou !” he cried, shouting through the door. “ Bloodthirsty tyrant ! beware what you do ! Deeply shall you repent your baseness, if you injure but a hair of his head ! I will brand your name with shame throughout Europe ! I will publish it before your barons to your teeth ! You are overheard, villain, and your crime shall not sleep in secret !”

But, in the dreadful scene passing without, neither nephew nor uncle seemed to heed his call. There was evidently a struggle, as if the King endeavoured to free himself from the

agonized clasp of Arthur, whose faint voice was heard every now and then, praying in vain for mercy, at the hands of the hard-hearted tyrant in whose power he was. At length the struggle seemed to grow fainter. A loud horrific cry rang echoing through the passages; and then, a heavy, deadly fall, as if some mass of unelastic clay were cast at once upon the hollow stone of the pavement. Two or three deep groans followed; and then a distinct blow, as if a weapon of steel, stabbed through some softer matter, struck at last against a block of stone. A retreating step was heard;—then whispering voices;—then, shortly after, the paddling of a boat in the water below the tower;—a heavy plunge in the stream;—and all was silent.*

* The French writers of that day almost universally agree in attributing the death of Arthur to John's own hand. The English writers do not positively deny it, and we have indubitable proof that such was the general rumour through all the towns and castles of Europe at the time.—See Guill. Guiart. Guill. de Nangis. Guill. le Breton. Mat. Paris, &c.

CHAPTER III.

No language can express the joy that spread over the face of France, when the first peal from the steeples of the churches announced that the interdict was raised — that the nation was once more to be held as a Christian people — that the barrier was cast down which had separated it from the pale of the Church.— Labour, and care, and sorrow, seemed suspended. The whole country rang with acclamations; and so crowded were the churches, when the gates were first thrown open, that several hundred serfs were crushed to death in the struggle for admission.

Every heart was opened—every face beamed

with delight ; and the aspect of the whole land was as glad and bright, as if salvation had then first descended upon earth. There were but two beings, in all the realm, to whom that peal sounded unjoyfully ; and to them it rang like the knell of death. Agnes de Meranie heard it on her knees, and mingled her prayers with tears. Philip Augustus listened to it with a dark and frowning brow ; and, striding up and down his solitary hall, he commented on each echoing clang, with many a deep and bitter thought. “They rejoice,” said he mentally—“they rejoice in my misery. They ring a peal to celebrate my disappointment ; but each stroke of that bell breaks a link of the chain that held them together, secure from my vengeance. Let them beware ! Let them beware ! or that peal shall be the passing bell to many a proud knight and rebellious baron.”

Philip’s calculations were not wrong. During the existence of the interdict, the nobles of France had been held together in their opposi-

tion to the Monarch, by a bond entwined of several separate parts, which were all cut at once by the King's submission to the Papal authority. The first tie had been general superstition ; but this would have hardly proved strong enough to unite them powerfully together, had the cause of Philip's opposition to the Church been any thing but entirely personal. In his anger, too, the King had for a moment forgotten his policy, and added another tie to that which existed before. Instead of courting public opinion to his support, he had endeavoured to compel his unwilling barons to co-operate in his resistance ; and by severity and oppression, wherever his will was opposed, had complicated the bond of union amongst his vassals, which the interdict had first begun to twine.

The moment, however, that the Papal censure was removed, all those who had not really suffered from the King's wrath, fell off from the league against him ; and many of the others, on whom his indignation had actually fallen, whe-

ther from blind fear or clear-sighted policy, judged that safety was no longer to be found but in his friendship, and made every advance to remove his anger.

Philip repelled none. Those on whose services he could best rely, and whose aid was likely to be most useful, he met with courtesy and frankness, remitted the fines he had exacted, restored the feofs he had forfeited, and, by the voluntary reparation of the oppression he had committed, won far more upon opinion, than he had lost by the oppression itself. Those, however, who still murmured, or held back, he struck unsparingly. He destroyed their strongholds, he forfeited their feofs, and, thus joining policy and vengeance, he increased his own power, he punished the rebellious, he scared his enemies, and he added many a fair territory to his own domain.

The eyes of the Pope were still upon France ; and seeing that the power for which he had made such an effort was falling even by the

height to which he had raised it; that the barons were beginning to sympathize and co-operate with the King; and that those who still remained in opposition to the Monarch, were left now exposed to the full effects of his anger,—Innocent resolved at once to make new efforts, both by private intrigue, and by another daring exercise of his power, to establish firmly what he had already gained.

Amidst those who still remained discontented in France, he spared no means to maintain that discontent; and amidst Philip's external enemies he spread the project of that tremendous league, which afterwards gathering force like an avalanche, rolled on with overwhelming power, in spite of all the efforts which Innocent at last thought fit to oppose to it, when he found that the mighty engine which he had first put in motion threatened to destroy himself. At the same time, to give these schemes time to acquire maturity and strength, and to break the bond of union which war always creates between a

brave nation and a warlike monarch, he prepared to interpose between John of England and Philip Augustus, and to command the latter, with new threats of excommunication in case of disobedience, to abandon the glorious course that he was pursuing in person on the right of the Loire, at the moment when we have seen him despatch Arthur to carry on the war on the left.

It was somewhere about the period of the events we have related in our last chapter, and winter had compelled Philip to close the campaign which he had been pursuing against John with his wonted activity, when one morning, as he sat framing his plans of warfare for the ensuing year, a conversation to the following effect took place between him and Guerin.

“—And then for Rouen!” said the King. “Thus cut off from all supplies, as I have showed you, and beleaguered by such an army as I can bring against it, it cannot hold out a month. But we must be sudden, Guerin, in our movements, carefully avoiding any demon-

stration of our intentions, till we sit down before the place, lest John should remove our poor Arthur, and thus foil us in the chief point of our enterprise. Three more such bright sunshining mornings as this, and I will call my men to the *monstre*. God send us an early spring!"

"I fear me much, Sire, that the Pope will interfere," replied Guerin; "repeated couriers are passing between Rome and England. He has already remonstrated strongly against the war; and, I little doubt, will endeavour, by all means, to put a stop to it."

"Ha, say'st thou?" said the King, looking up with a smile, from a rude plan of the city of Rouen, round which he was drawing the lines of an encampment. "God send he may interfere, Guerin! He has triumphed over me once, good friend. It is time that I should triumph over him."

"But are you sure of being able to do so, Sire?" demanded Guerin, with his usual simple frankness, putting the naked truth before the

King's eyes, without one qualifying phrase! "The pleasure of resistance would, methinks, be too dear bought, at the expense of a second defeat. The Pope is strengthening himself by alliances. But yesterday the Duke of Burgundy informed me, that six successive messengers from the Holy See had passed through his territories within a month, all either bound to Otho the Emperor, or to Ferrand Count of Flanders."

Philip listened with somewhat of an abstracted air. His eye fixed upon vacancy, as if he were gazing on the future; and yet it was evident that he listened still, for a smile of triumphant consciousness in his own powers glanced from time to time across his lip, as the Minister touched upon the machinations of his enemies.

"I fear me, Sire," continued Guerin, "that your bold resistance to the will of the Pontiff has created you at Rome an enemy that it will not be easy to appease."

"God send it!" was all Philip's reply, ut-

tered with the same absent look, as if his mind was still busy with other matters. “ God send it, Guerin! God send it !”

The Minister was mute, and, after a momentary pause on both sides, Philip Augustus started up, repeating in a louder voice, as if impatient of the silence, “ God send it, I say, Guerin ! for, if he does commit that gross mistake in meddling in matters where he has no pretence of religious authority to support him in the eyes of the superstitious crowd, by the Lord that lives ! I will crush him like a hornet that has stung me !”

“ But, my Lord, consider,” said Guerin, “ consider that—”

“ Consider!” interrupted the King : “ I have considered, Guerin ! Think you I am blind, my friend ? Think you I do not see ?—I tell thee, Guerin, I look into the workings of this Pope’s mind as clearly as ever did prophet of old into the scheme of futurity. He hates me nobly, I know it—with all the venom of a proud and passionate heart. He hates me

profoundly, and I hate him as well. Thank God for that ! I would not meet him but on equal terms ; and, I tell thee, Guerin, I see all which that hatred may produce."

The King paused, and took two or three strides in the apartment, as if to compose himself, and give his thoughts a determinate form ; for he had lashed himself already into no small anger, with the very thoughts of the hatred between the proud prelate and himself. In a few moments he stopped, and, sitting down again, looked up in the face of the Minister, somewhat smiling at his own vehemence. Yet there was something bitter in the smile too, from remembrance of the events which had first given rise to his enmity towards the Pope. After this had passed away, he leaned his cheek upon his hand, and, still looking up, marked the emphasis of his discourse with the other hand, laying it from time to time on the sleeve of the Minister's gown.

" I see it all, Guerin," said he, " and I am prepared for all. This arrogant Prelate, with his pride elevated by his late triumph, and his

heart embittered by my resistance, will do all that man can do to overthrow me. In the first place, he will endeavour to stop my progress against that base unknightly king—John of Anjou: but he will fail, for my barons have already acknowledged the justice of the war; and I have already ten written promises to support me against Rome itself, should Rome oppose me. There is the engagement of the Duke of Burgundy. Read that."

Guerin took up the parchment to which the King pointed, and read a clear and positive agreement, on the part of the Duke of Burgundy, to aid Philip, with all his knights and vassals, against John of England, in despite of even the thunders of the Church—to march and fight at his command during the whole of that warfare, how long soever it might last; and never either to lay down his arms, or to make peace, truce, or treaty, either with the King of England, or the Bishop of Rome, without the express consent and order of Philip himself.

Guerin was surprised ; for though he well knew that—notwithstanding his own office—the King transacted the greater part of the high political negociations of the kingdom himself, and often without the entire knowledge of any one, yet he had hardly thought that such important arrangements could have been made totally unknown to him. It was so, however ; and Philip, not remarking his Minister's astonishment—for, as we have said before, the countenance of Guerin was not very apt to express any of the emotions of his mind—proceeded to comment on the letter he had shown him.

“ Ten such solemn agreements have I obtained from my great vassals,” said he, “ and each can bring full two thousand men into the field. But still, Guerin, it is not the immense power that this affords me—greater than I have ever possessed since I sat upon the throne of France. ’Tis not the power that yields me the greatest pleasure ; but it is, that herein is the seed of resistance to the Papal authority;

and I will water it so well, that it shall grow up into a tall tree, under whose shadow I may sit at ease.—Mark me, Guerin, and remember! Henceforth, never shall an interdict be again cast upon the realm of France,—never shall Pope or Prelate dare to excommunicate a French King; and should such a thing be by chance attempted, it shall be but as the idle wind that hisses at its own emptiness.—The seed is there,” continued he, striking his hand proudly on the parchment,—“the seed is there, and it shall spread far and wide.”

“But even should the greater part of your barons enter into this compact, Sire,” said Guerin,—“you may be crushed by a coalition from without. I do not wish to be the prophet of evil; but I only seek to place the question in every point of view. Might not then, Sire, the coalition of the Pope, the Emperor, and the King of England—?”

“Might wage war with me, but could never conquer, if France were true to France,” in-

terrupted the Monarch. “ Guerin, I tell thee, that an united nation was never overcome, and never shall be, so long as the world does last. The fate of a nation is always in its own hands. Let it be firm, and it is safe.”

“ But we unfortunately know, Sire,” said the Minister with a doubtful shake of the head, “ that France is not united. Many, many of the royal vassals, and those some of the most powerful, cannot be depended on. Ferrand, Count of Flanders, for instance. I need not tell you, Sire, that he waits but an opportunity to throw off his allegiance. There are many more. Count Julian of the Mount has been openly a follower of the court of John of England; and though he is now on his lands, doubtless preparing all for revolt, he has left his daughter, they say, as security for his faith at the Court of Rouen. May we not suppose, Sire, that, when the moment comes which is to try men’s hearts in this affair, we shall find thousands who—either from fear of the Papal

censure—or from personal enmity—or a treacherous and fickle disposition—or some one of all the many many circumstances that sow treasons in times of danger and trouble—will fall off from you at the instant you want them most, and go over to swell the ranks of your enemies?"

"I do not believe it," replied Philip thoughtfully,—“I do not believe it! The Pope's authority in a war unconnected with any affair of the Church, will have small effect, and, if exerted, will, like a reed in a child's hand, break itself at the first impotent blow. Besides, I much doubt whether Innocent would now exert it against me if it were to be used in favour of Otho of Saxony. He hates me, true! He hates me more than he hates any other king; but yet, Guerin, but yet, I see a thread mingling with the web of yon Pope's policy that may make it all run down. Again, the war against John is a national, and must be a popular war. I will take care that it shall not be stretched till France is weary of it; and John's

weakness, joined with Innocent's insolence, will soon make it a war against the nation generally, not against the King personally. The barons will find that they are defending themselves, while they defend me; and I will divide the lands of him who turns traitor, amongst those that remain true. I tell thee, Guerin, I tell thee, I would not for the world that this Pope should slacken his hand, or abate one atom of his pride. He is sowing enemies, my friend; and he shall reap an iron harvest."

Philip's eyes flashed as his thoughts ran on into the future. His brow knit sternly; his hand clasped tight the edge of the table by which he was seated, and, after a moment or two of silence, he burst forth:—"Let him but give me the means of accustoming my barons to resist his usurped power—one great victory—and then!"

"Then what, Sire?" demanded the Hospitaller calmly, his unimpassioned mind not following the quick and lightning-like turns of Philip's rapid feelings—"then, what?"

“ Agnes !” exclaimed Philip, starting up and grasping Guerin’s arm—“ Agnes and vengeance ! By Heaven ! it glads my very soul to see Innocent’s machinations against me — machinations that, either by the ingratitude of others, or my revenge, shall fall — certainly fall, like a thunderbolt on his head. Let him raise up pomp-loving Otho, that empty mockery of a Cæsar ! Let him call in crafty, fickle, blood-thirsty John, with his rebellious, disaffected barons ! Let him join them with boasting Ferrand of Flanders ! Let him add Italian craft to German stubbornness ! Let him cast his whole weight of power upon the die ! I will stake my being against it, and perish or avenge my wrongs, and recover what I have lost !”

“ I fear me, Sire — ” said Guerin.

“ Speak not to me of fear !” interrupted the King. “ I tell thee, good friend, that in my day I have seen but one man fit to cope with a king — I mean, Richard of England. He is gone — God rest his soul ! — but he was a good

knight and a great warrior, and might have been a great king, if Fate had spared him till time had taken some of the lion's worst part from his heart, and sprinkled some cooler wisdom on his brow. But he is gone, and has left none like him behind. As for the others, I will make their necks but steps to gain the height from which my arm may reach to Rome."

"'Tis a far way to Rome! Sire," replied Guerin, "and many have stretched their arm to reach it, and failed in the attempt. I need not remind you of the Emperor Frederic, Sire, who struggled in vain to resist."

"Nor of Philip of France, you would say," interposed the King, with a gloomy smile that implied perhaps pain, but not anger. "Philip of France!" he repeated, "who strove but to retain the wife of his bosom, when a proud priest bade him cast her from him—and he too failed! But Philip of France is not yet dead; and between the to-day and the to-morrow, which constitute life and death, much may be done.—I failed,

Guerin, it is true; but I failed by my own fault. My eyes dazzled with the mist of passion; I made many a sad mistake: but now, my eyes are open, my position is changed, and my whole faculties are bent to watch the errors of my adversaries, and to guard against any myself. But we will speak no more of this. Were it to cost me crown and kingdom, life, and even renown, I would thank God for having given me the means of striking at least one blow for love and vengeance. We will speak no more of it. The day wears."

It needed not the science of an old courtier to understand what the King's last words implied; and Guerin instantly took his leave, and left the Monarch alone.

The truth was, that to thoughts of ambition, schemes of policy, and projects of vengeance, other ideas had succeeded in the mind of Philip Augustus. His was a strange state of being. He lived as it were in two worlds—Like the king of old, he seemed to have two spirits

There was the one that, bright, and keen, and active, mingled in the busy scenes of politics and warfare, guiding, directing, raising up, and overthrowing ; and there was another, still, silent, deep, in the inmost chambers of his heart, yet sharing more, far more, than half the kingdom of his thoughts, and prompting or commanding all the actions of the other. It was this spirit that now claimed its turn to reign exclusively ; and Philip gave up all his soul to the memory of Agnes de Meranie. Here he had a world apart from aught else on earth, wherein the Spirit of deep feeling swayed supreme ; and thence issued that strong control that his heart ever exercised over the bright Spirit of genius and talent, with which he was so eminently endowed.

He thought of Agnes de Meranie. The fine chord of association had been touched a thousand times during his conversation with Guerin, and at every mention of her name, at every thought that connected itself with her

unhappy fate, fresh sorrows and regrets, memories sweet, though painful,—most painful, that they were but memories—came crowding on his heart, and claiming all its feelings. As soon as the Minister was gone, he called his page, and bade him see if the Canon of St. Berthe's was in attendance. The boy returned in a few minutes, followed by the wily priest, whom we have already heard of as the confessor of Agnes de Meranie. Philip's feelings towards him were very different from those he entertained towards Guerin. There was that certain sort of doubt in the straightforwardness of his intentions, which a cunning man,—let him cover his heart with what veil of art he will,—can hardly ever escape. Philip had no cause to doubt, and yet he doubted. Nor did he love the plausible kind of eloquence, which the priest had some pride in displaying; and therefore he treated him with that proud, cold dignity, which left the subject but little opportunity of exercising his oratory upon the King.

"Good Morrow, Father," he said, bending his brows upon the Canon : "when last I saw you, you were about to speak to me concerning the Queen, before persons whom I admit not to mingle in my private affairs. Now answer me, as I shall question you, and remember, a brief reply is the best. When saw you my wife, the Queen?"

"It was on the fifth day of the last week," replied the Canon, in a low sweet tone of voice, "and it was with sorrow mingled with hope—"

"Bound yourself in your reply, by my question, Sir Clerk," said the King sternly. "I ask you neither your sorrows nor your hopes. How was the Queen in health?"

"But frail, if one might judge by her appearance, Sire," answered the priest ; "she was very pale, and seemed weak ; but she said that she was well, and indeed, sweet lady, she was like, if I may use a figure—"

"Use none, Sir," interrupted the King. "Did she take exercise?"

"Even too much, I fear, beau Sire," replied the Canon. "For hours, and hours, she wanders through the loneliest parts of the forest, sending from her all her attendants—"

"Ha ! alone?" cried the King : "does she go alone ?"

"Entirely, Sire," replied the Canon of St. Berthe's, whose hopes of a bishopric in Istria were not yet extinct. "I spoke with the leech Rigord, whom you commanded to watch over her health ; and he did not deny, that the thing most necessary to the lady's cure, was the air of her own land, and the tending of her own relations ; for he judges by her wanderings, that her mind is hurt, and needs soothing and keeping afar from the noisy turbulence of the world ; as we keep a sick man's chamber from the glare of the mid-day sun."

Philip heard him out, fixing his eyes on the wily priest's face, as if seeking to trace the cunning in his countenance, that he was sure was busy at his heart : but the Canon kept his look

bent upon the ground while speaking; and, when he had done, judging that his words pleased, by being indulged in a much longer speech than Philip had ever before permitted him to make, he raised his eyes to the Monarch's face, with a look of humiliated self-confidence, which, though it betrayed none of the secrets of his wishes, did not succeed in producing any favourable impression on the King.

“ Begone !” said the Monarch, in not the most gentle tone possible; but then, instantly sensible that his dislike to the man might be unjust, and that his haughtiness was at all events ungenerous, he added more mildly :—“ Leave me, good Father—I would be alone. Neglect not your charge, and you shall feel the King’s gratitude.”

The Canon of St. Berthe’s bowed low in silence, and withdrew, pondering, with not a little mortification, on the apparent unsuccessfulness of schemes, which, though simple

enough, if viewed with the eyes of the world at present, when cunning, like every other art, has reached the corruption of refinement, were deeply politic in that age, when slyness was in the simplicity of its infancy.

In the mean while, Philip Augustus paused on the same spot where the priest had left him, in deep thought. “Alone!” muttered he,—“alone! I have vowed a deep vow, neither to touch her lip, nor enter her dwelling, nor to speak one word to her, for six long months, without, prior to that period’s return, a council shall have pronounced on my divorce. But I have not vowed not to see her. I can bear this no longer! Yon priest tortures me with tales of her sickness! He must have some dark motive! Yet, she may be sick too.—Ho! without there!”

The Page who had before conducted the Canon of St. Berthe’s to the presence of the King, now presented himself again.

“Gilbert!” said the Monarch, “come hither,

boy ! Thou art of noble birth ; and art faithful and true, I well believe. Now, doubtless thou hast learned so much of knightly service, that you know, the Page who babbles of his Lord's actions is held dishonoured and base.— Fear not, youth, I am not angry. If I find you discreet, this hand shall some day lay knighthood on your shoulder ; but, if I find you gossip of my deeds, it shall strike your ears from your head, and send you forth like a serf, into the fields. With that warning, speed to the west hall of the armoury. Thou wilt there find, in the third window from the door, on the left-hand, a casque, with the *éventaille* cut like a cross ; a haubert, with a steel hood ; a double-handed sword ; a table of attente, and other things fitting. Bring them to me hither, and be quick.”

The Page sped away, proud to be employed by the Monarch on an errand usually reserved for his noblest squires ; and returned in a few minutes, bearing the haubert and the greives ;

for the load of the whole armour would have been too much for his young arms to lift. Another journey brought the casque and sword; and a third, the brassards and plain polished shield, called a table of attente. The whole armour was one of those plain and unornamented suits much used in the first fervour of the crusades, when every other decoration than that of the cross was considered superfluous.

Without other aid than the Page could afford, whose hands trembled with delight at their new occupation, Philip arrayed himself in the arms that had been brought him; and, taking care to remove every trace by which he could have been recognised, he put on the casque, which, opening at the side, had no visor, properly so called; but which, nevertheless, entirely concealed his face, the only opening, when the clasps were fastened, being a narrow cruciform aperture in the front, to admit the light and air. When this was done, he wrote upon a slip of parchment the simple words, “The King would be

alone," and gave them to the Page, as his warrant for preventing any one from entering his apartment during his absence. He then ordered him to pass the bridge, from the island to the tower of the Louvre, and to bring a certain horse, which he described, from the stables of that palace, to the end of the garden wall; and waiting some minutes after his departure, to give time for the execution of his commands, the King rose, and, choosing the least frequented of the many staircases in the palace, proceeded towards the street.

In the court he encountered several of his sergeants-at-arms, and his other attendants, who gazed coldly at the strange Knight, as he seemed, who, thus encased in complete steel, passed through them, without offering or receiving any salutation. Thence he proceeded into the busy streets; where, so strong was the force of habit, that Philip started more than once at the want of the reverence to which he was accustomed; and had to recall the disguise he had

assumed, ere he could fancy the disrespect unintentional.

At the spot he had named, he found the Page with the horse; but the sturdy groom, whose charge it was in the stable, stood there also, fully resolved to let no one mount him without sufficient authority: nor was it till the sight of the King's signet showed him in whose presence he stood, that he ceased his resistance. The groom suddenly raised to an immense height, in his own conceit, by having become, in any way, a sharer in the King's secret, winked to the page, and held the stirrup while the Monarch mounted.

Philip sprang into the saddle. Laying his finger on the aperture of the casque, to enjoin secrecy, and adding, in a stern tone, “On your life!” he turned his horse’s head, and galloped away.

CHAPTER IV.

IT is strange to read what countries once were, and to compare the pictures old chroniclers have handed down, with the scenes as they lie before us at present. In the neighbourhood of great capitals, however, it is, that the hand of man wages the most inveterate war with Nature; and were I to describe the country through which Philip Augustus passed, as he rode quickly onward towards Mantes, the modern traveller who had followed that road would search his memory in vain for scenery that no longer exists. Deep marshes, ancient forests, many a steep hill and profound valley, with small scattered villages, “like angel visits,

few and far between," surrounded the Monarch on his onward way ; and, where scarcely a hundred yards can now be traversed without meeting many and various of the biped race, Philip Augustus rode over long miles without catching a glimpse of the human form divine.

The King's heart beat high with the thoughts of seeing her he loved, were it but for one short casual glance at a distance ; but even independent of such feelings, he experienced a delight, a gladness, a freedom in the very knowledge that he was concealed from all the world ; and that, while wrapped in the plain arms that covered him, he was liberated from all the slavery of dignity and the importunity of respect. There was a degree of romance in the sensation of his independence, which we have all felt, more or less, at one time of our lives, even surrounded as we are by all the shackles of a most unromantic society, but which affected Philip to a thousand-fold extent, both from his posi-

tion as a king, and from the wild and chivalrous age in which he lived.

Thus he rode on, amidst the old shadowy oaks that overhung his path, meditating dreams and adventures that might almost have suited the Knight of La Mancha, but which, in that age, were much more easily attainable than in the days of Cervantes.

Of course, all such ideas were much modified by Philip's peculiar cast of mind, and by his individual situation ; but still the scenery, the sensation of being freed from restraint, and the first bland air, too, of the early spring, all had their effect ; and as he had himself abandoned the tedious ceremonies of a court, his mind, in sympathy, as it seemed, quitted all the intricate and painful mazes of policy, to roam in bright freedom amidst the wilds of feeling and imagination.

Such dreams, however, did not produce a retarded pace, for it wanted little more than an hour to mid-day ; a long journey of forty miles

was before him, and his only chance of accomplishing his purpose was in arriving during those hours that Agnes might be supposed to wander alone in the forest, according to the account of the Canon of St. Berthe's. Philip therefore spurred on at full speed, and, avoiding as much as possible the towns, arrived near the spot where Rosny now stands, towards three o'clock.

At that spot, the hills which confine the course of the Seine fall back in a semicircle from its banks, and leave it to wander through a wide rich valley for the distance of about half a league, before they again approach close to the river at Rolleboise.

There, however, the chalky banks become high and precipitous, leaving in many places, but a narrow road, between themselves and the water; though, at other spots, the river takes a wide turn away, and interposes a broad meadow between its current and the cliffs.

In those days, the whole of the soil in that

part of the country was covered with wood. The hills, and the valleys, and the plains round Rosny and Rolleboise, were all forest ground ; and the trees absolutely dipped themselves in the Seine. To the left, a little before reaching the chapel of Notre Dame de Rosny, the road, on which Philip had hitherto proceeded, turned off into the heart of Normandy ; and such was the direct way to the castle in which Agnes de Meranie had fixed her dwelling ; but to the right, nearly in the same line as the present road to Rouen, lay another lesser path, which, crossing the woods in the immediate vicinity of the château, was the one that Philip judged fit to follow.

The road here first wound along down to the very banks of the Seine ; and then, quitting it at the little hamlet of Rolleboise, mounted the steep hill, and dipping down rapidly again, skirted between the high chalky banks on the left, and a small plain of underwood that lay on the right towards the river.

Dug deep into the heart of the cliff, were then to be seen, as now, a variety of caves said to have been hollowed by the heathen Normans on their first invasion of France, some yawning and bare, but most of them covered over with underwood and climbing plants.

By the side of one of the largest of these, had grown a gigantic oak, which, stretching its arms above, formed a sort of shady bower round the entrance. Various signs of its being inhabited struck Philip's eye as he approached, such as a distinct pathway from the road to the mouth, and the marks of recent fire; but, as there was at that time scarcely a forest in France which had not its hermit—and as many of these, from some strange troglodytical propensity, had abjured all habitations made with hands—the sight at first excited no surprise in the bosom of the Monarch. It was different, however, when, as he passed by, he beheld hanging on the lowest of the oak's leafless branches, a knight's gauntlet, and he almost

fancied that one of the romances of the day were realized, and that the next moment he should behold some grave enchanter, or some learned sage, issue from the bowels of the rock, and call upon him to achieve some high and perilous adventure.

He rode by, notwithstanding, without meeting with any such interruption ; and, thoroughly acquainted with every turn in the woods, he proceeded to a spot where he could see the castle, and a portion of several of the roads which led to it : and, pushing in his horse amongst the withered leaves of the underwood, he waited in anxious hopes of catching but a glance of her he loved.

It is in such moments of expectation that Imagination is often the most painfully busy, especially when she has some slight foundation of reality whereon to build up fears. Philip pictured to himself Agnes, as he had first seen her in the full glow of youth, and health, and beauty ; and he then remembered her as she

had left him, when a few short months of sorrow and anxiety had blasted the rose upon her cheek, and extinguished the light of her eye. Yet he felt he loved her more deeply, more painfully, the pale and faded thing she was then, than when she had first blessed his arms in all the pride of loveliness; and many a sad inference did he draw, from the rapidity with which that change had taken place, in regard to what she might have since undergone under the pressure of more stinging and ascertained calamity. Thus, while he watched, he conjured up many a painful fear, till reality could scarcely have matched his anticipations.

No Agnes, however, appeared, and the King began to deem that the report of the Confessor had been false, when he suddenly perceived the flutter of white garments on the battlements of the castle. In almost every person, some one of the senses is, as it were, peculiarly connected with memory. In some it is the ear, and sounds that have been heard in former days will waken,

the moment they are breathed, bright associations of lands, and scenes, and hours, from which they are separated by many a weary mile, and many a long obliterating year. In others, it is the eye, and forms that have been once seen are never forgot; while those that are well known, scarce need the slightest, most casual glance, to be recognised at once, though the distance may be great, and their appearance but momentary. This was the case with Philip Augustus; and though what he discerned was but as a vacillating white spot on the dark grey walls of the castle, it needed no second glance to tell him, that *there* was Agnes de Meranie. He tied his horse to one of the shrubs, and with a beating heart sprang out into the road, to gain a nearer and more satisfactory view of her he loved best on earth.

Secure in the concealment of his armour, he approached close to the castle, and came under the wall, just as Agnes, followed by one of her women, turned upon the battlements. Her

cheek was indeed ashy pale, with the clear line of her brown eyebrow marked more distinctly than ever on the marble whiteness of her forehead. She walked with her hands clasped, in an attitude that spoke that utter hopelessness in all earth's things, which sees no resource on this side of the grave ; and her eyes were fixed unmovingly on the ground.

Philip gazed as he advanced, not doubting that the concealment of his armour was sure ; but at that moment, the clang of the steel woke Agnes from her reverie. She turned her eyes to where he stood. Heaven knows whether she recognised him or not ; but she paused suddenly, and stretching her clasped hands towards him, she gazed as if she had seen a vision, murmured a few inarticulate words, and fell back into the arms of the lady who followed her.

Philip sprang towards the gate of the castle, and already stood under the arch of the barbican, when the vow that the Pope had exacted from him, not to pass the threshold of her

dwelling till the lawfulness of his divorce was decided, flashed across his mind, and he paused. Upon a promise, that that decision should be within one half-year, he had pledged his knightly honour to forbear—that decision had not yet been given ; but the half-year was not near expired, and the tie of a knightly vow he dared not violate, however strong might be the temptation.

The grate of the barbican was open, and at the distance of a few yards within its limits stood several of the soldiers of the guard, with the *Prévôt*. Not a little surprise was excited amongst these by the sudden approach of an armed knight, and at his as sudden pause.

“ What seek ye, Sir Knight ? ” demanded the *Prévôt*,—“ what seek ye here ? ”

“ News of the Queen’s health,” replied the Monarch. “ I am forbidden to pass the gate ; but, I pray thee, Sir *Prévôt*, send to inquire how fares the Queen this morning.”

The officer willingly complied, though he somewhat marvelled at the stranger’s churlishness

in resting without the threshold. The reply brought from within by the messenger was that the Queen had been seized but a few minutes before by one of those swoons that so much afflicted her, but that she had already recovered, and was better and more cheerful since. The message, the man added, had been dictated by the lady herself, which showed that she was better indeed, for in general she seldom spoke to any one.

It fell like a sweet drop of balm upon Philip's heart. There was something told him that he had been recognised, and that Agnes had been soothed and pleased, by the romantic mark of his love that he had given ; that she had felt for him, and with him ; and dictated the reply he had received, in order to give back to his bosom the alleviation that his coming had afforded to her. With these sweet imaginations he fell into a deep reverie, and, forgetful of the eyes that were upon him, paused for several minutes before the barbican, and then, slowly

returning on his steps, descended the hill to the thicket, where he had left his horse ; and, throwing the bridle over his arm, led him on the path by which he had come.

“ The churl !” said one of the soldiers, looking after him. “ He did not vouchsafe one word of thanks for our doing his errand.”

“ Another madman ! I will warrant thee !” said a second archer.

“ He is no madman, that,” replied the Pré-vôt thoughtfully. “ Put your fingers on your lips, and hold your tongues, good fellows ! I have heard that voice before ;” and, with a meaning nod of the head, he quitted the barbican, and left the soldiers to unravel his mystery if they could.

In the mean while the King proceeded slowly on his way, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, till he came near the same range of caves which he had passed about an hour before. Every thing was still in the same state ; and no human being was visible. The gauntlet

remained upon the tree, seemingly only to have been touched by the wind of heaven ; and, scarcely thinking what he did, Philip approached, and reaching it with his hand, took it down from the bough to which it was suspended.

As he did so, however, a noise in the cave showed him, that his action was not without a witness ; and, in a moment after, a tall, powerful man issued forth, and advanced towards him. He was clothed in plate armour, somewhat rusted with the damp ; but the fine tracery of gold, by which it had been ornamented, was still visible ; and the spurs and belt which he wore, proclaimed him a knight. He held his casque in his hand, busying himself as he advanced, to disentangle the lacings of it, as if in haste to put it on ; and his head was bare, exposing a profusion of long tangled dark hair, which was just beginning to be slightly touched with grey. His face was as pale as ashes, and wan beyond all mortal wanness ; and in his large

dark eyes there shone a brilliant, wavering, uncertain fire, not to be mistaken for aught but insanity.

The King gazed on him, at once recognizing his person; but hardly able to believe that, in the wild lunatic before him, he saw the calm, cold, tranquil Thibalt of Auvergne.

In the mean while, the Count came forward, impatiently twisting in his haste the already tangled lacings of his helmet into still more intricate knots.

“ Now, discourteous Knight!—now!” cried he, glaring on the King,—“ now will I do battle with thee on the cause; and make thee confess that she is Queen of France, and true and lawful wife of Philip the King! Wait but till I have laced my casque, and, on horse or on foot, I will give thee the lie! What! has the Pope at length sent thee to Mount Libanus to defy me? I tell thee, miscreant, I will prove it against him, and all his host!”

The first thought that passed through the

brain of Philip Augustus, was the memory of his ancient hatred to the unfortunate Count d'Auvergne, and the revived desire of vengeance for the injury he believed him to have attempted against him. Those feelings, however, in their full force, soon left him ; and pity for the unhappy state in which he saw him, though it could not remove his dislike, put a bar against his anger. "I come not to defy you, Sir Knight," said the King. " You mistake me. I am a stranger wandering this way—"

" The glove ! the glove !" cried the Count, interrupting him. " You have taken down my glove—you have accepted the challenge. Have I not written it up all over Mount Libanus, that whoever denies her to be his lawful wife, shall die ? If you draw not your sword, I will cleave you down as a traitor, and proclaim you a coward too. In Jerusalem and in Ascalon, before the hosts of the crescent and the cross, I will brand you as a felon, a traitor, and a coward.—Draw, draw, if you be knight and noble !"

So saying, he cast his casque away from him on the ground ; and, drawing his broadsword, rushed upon Philip with the fury of a lion. Self-defence became now absolutely necessary, for the King well knew that he was opposed to one of the best and most skilful knights of Christendom, whose madness was no hinderance to his powers as a man-at-arms ; and consequently, loosing the bridle of his horse, he drew his sword, and prepared to repel the madman's attack.

The conflict was long and desperate, though, had not the natural generosity of his disposition interfered, the King possessed an infinite advantage over the Count d'Auvergne, whose head was, as we have said, totally undefended. He refrained, however, from aiming one blow at that vulnerable part of his antagonist's person, till his scruples had nearly cost him his life, by the rings of his haubert giving way upon his left shoulder. The Count d'Auvergne saw his advantage, and pressed on with all the blind

fury of insanity, at the same time leaving his head totally unguarded. The heat of the combat had irritated the Monarch, and he now found it necessary to sacrifice all other considerations to the safety of his own life. He opposed his shield, therefore, to the thundering blows of his adversary, and raising his heavy double-edged sword high above the Count's naked head, in another moment would have terminated his sorrows for ever, when the blow was suspended by a circumstance which shall be related hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

IN the great hall of the ducal palace at Rouen, sat John, King of England, now the undisputed possessor of the British throne; and, though the blood of his nephew was scarce washed from his hands, and the record of his crime scarce dry in the annals of the world, he bore upon his lip that same idle smile, whose hideous lightness was the more dreadful when contrasted with the profound depravity of his heart. He was seated in an ivory chair, beneath a crimson dais, gorgeously arrayed after the fashion of the day, and surrounded with all the pomp of royalty. On his right-hand stood the Earl of Pembroke, with bitter grief

and indignation written in his curled lip and contracted brow, which found an answering expression in the countenance of Lord Bagot, the Earl of Essex, and almost every English Peer in the presence.

John saw their stern and discontented looks, and understood their import well ; but, strange to say, the chief cause of his fear being removed by the death of Arthur, he felt a degree of triumphant joy in the angry sorrow of his barons ; and calculated upon easily calming their irritation, before any new danger should arise to menace him. Indeed, with his usual false calculation, he already planned a new act of baseness, which, by punishing one who had contributed to the death of Arthur, by betraying him at Mirebeau — he hoped might, in some degree, satisfy those whom that death had rendered discontented ; forgetting, in his utter ignorance of such a thing as virtue, that, in the eyes of the honest, one base act can never repair another.

Close before the King, on the tapestry, which spread over the steps on which his throne was raised, and extended some way into the hall, stood no less a person than the Brabançois, Jodelle, now dressed in a fine tunic of purple cloth, with a baldric of cloth of gold supporting by his side a cross-hilted sword.

His air was the invariable air of a *parvenu*, in which flippant, yet infirm self-conceit, struggles to supply the place of habitual self-possession, and in its eagerness defeats its object. Consummate vanity, when joined with grace, will sometimes supply the place of high breeding; but a man that doubts in the least is lost. Thus stood Jodelle, smiling in the plenitude, as he thought, of royal favour; yet, with irritable knowledge of his want of right to appear in such a presence, glancing his eye from time to time round the proud barons of England, who, occupied with thoughts of more dignified anger, scarcely condescended to despise him.

In the mean while, King John, as we have

said, with a light and sneering smile upon his lips, amused himself with the conceited affectation of the Brabançois, who, enriched with the spoils of Mirebeau and several other towns in Poitou, now presented himself to claim the higher rewards that had been promised to his treachery. The King smiled ; yet, in the dark recesses of his cruel heart, he at the very moment destined the man to death, with whom he jested as a favoured follower.

The simile of a cat and a mouse is almost as musty as the Prince of Denmark's proverb ; and yet perhaps there is no other that would so aptly figure the manner in which John of England played with the traitor, of whose services he had availed himself to take his nephew prisoner.

“ Well, beau Sire Jodelle,” said he, after the Brabançois had made his obeisance, “ doubtless, you have exercised the royal permission we gave you, to plunder our loving subjects of Poitou to some purpose. Nay, your gay

plumage speaks it. You were not feathered so, Sir Jodelle, when last we saw you. But our homely proverb has it, ‘ Fine feathers make fine birds.’—Is it not so, Lord Pembroke?”

“ Not always, Sir,” answered the Earl boldly. “ I have known a vulture plumed like an eagle, yet not deceive a daw !”

John’s brow darkened for an instant, but the next it was all clear again, and he replied, “ Your Lordship follows a metaphor as closely as a buzzard does a field mouse. Think you not, Sire Jodelle, that our English Lords have fine wits ? Marry, if you had possessed as fine, you would have kept at a goodly distance from us all ; for there are amongst us, men that love you not ; and you might chance to get one of those sympathetic knots tied round your neck, that draw themselves the tighter, the more you tug at them.”

“ I fear not, Sire,” replied Jodelle, though there was a sneering touch of earnest in the

King's jests, that made his cheek turn somewhat pale,—“ I fear not ; trusting that you will grant me your royal protection.”

“ That I will, man !—that I will !” replied the Monarch, “ and elevate you ;” and he glanced his eyes round his court, to see if his jest was understood and appreciated. Some of the courtiers smiled, but the greater part still maintained their stern gravity ; and John proceeded, applying to the Coterel the terms of distinctions used towards knights, not without an idea of mortifying those who heard, as well as of mocking him to whom they were addressed. “ Well, beau Sire,” he said, “ and what gives us the pleasure of your worshipful presence at this time ? Some business of rare import, doubtless, some noble or knightly deed to be done.”

“ I am ever ready to do you what poor service I may, Sire,” replied Jodelle. “ I come, therefore, to tell you that I have raised the band of Free-companions, for which you gave me your royal permission, and to beg you to

take order that they may have the pay* and appointments which you promised."

"Thy demand shall be satisfied on that head," replied John in a serious and condescending tone, calculated to allay all fears in the mind of Jodelle, if he had begun to conceive any. "By my faith! we shall need every man-at-arms we can get, whether vassal or Brabançois, for Philip of France threatens loud.—Now, Sir Jodelle, what more?"

"Simply this order on your royal treasury," replied Jodelle, quite reassured by the King's last words. "Your treasurer refuses to acquit it, without another direct warrant from you."

"Give it to me," said the King, holding out his hand, into which Jodelle, somewhat unwilling, placed the order for ten thousand crowns, which he had received as the reward of his

* It has been asserted, that these troops received no pay, but supported themselves by plunder. I find them, however, called mercenaries, in more than one instance, which clearly implies, that they fought for hire.

treachery. “ And now,” proceeded John, “ we will at once arrange these affairs, without the least delay, for diligence in rendering justice to all men is a kingly virtue. In the first place, then, for the appointments of the Free-companions raised by this worthy captain.—We command you, William Humet,* to send them off straight to the bands of our dearly beloved Mercader, there to be drafted in, man by man, so that, being well used and entertained, they may serve us truly and faithfully.”

“ But, Sire !” exclaimed Jodelle, turning as pale as death.

“ Tut man ! tut !” cried the King, “ we will find means to satisfy every one. Hear us to an end. In regard to this order on our royal treasury.—Stand forward John of Wincaunton ! You are Deputy *Prévôt*, are you not ?”

A short, stout, bull-necked sort of person

* Constable of Normandy in the year 1200, and following, as appears from a treaty between John and Philip, concluded at Gueleton.

came forth from behind the throne, and, placing himself beside Jodelle, bowed in assent to the King's question.

"Well, then," proceeded John, "by my faith! you must serve me for Deputy Treasurer also, for want of a better."

John of Wincaunton, who had a keen apprehension of the King's jests in this sort, bowed again, and making a sign, by holding up two of his fingers, so as to be seen by a line of men-at-arms behind the circle of nobles who occupied the front of the scene, he laid his other hand upon Jodelle's arm, while two stout soldiers ran round and seized him from behind. Such precautions, however, were utterly unnecessary, for the first touch of the *Prévôt*'s hand upon his arm operated like Prospero's wand. All power and strength seemed to go out of the Brabançois' limbs; his arms hung useless by his side, his knees bent, and his nether lip quivered with the very act of fear.

"Take the caitiff," cried John, frowning on

him bitterly,—“take him, *Prévôt*; carry him to the very bound of Normandy, and there, see you acquit me of all obligation towards him. Hang him up between Normandy and France, that all men of both lands may see his reward; for, though we may sometimes use such slaves for the deep causes of state necessity, we would not encourage their growth.—Away with him!”

Jodelle struggled to speak, but his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth; and before he could force his throat to utterance, a bustle at the other end of the long hall called the attention of every one but himself.

“Sir King! Sir King! hear me, for mercy’s sake!” cried the Brabançois, as he was dragged away. But John heeded him not, fixing his eyes upon the figure of the Earl of Salisbury, who, armed at all points except the head, and covered with dust, pushed through the crowd of attendants at the extremity of the apartment, followed by two or three other persons, as dusty and travel-stained as himself. His cheek was

flushed, his brow was bent and frowning, and, without a show even of reverence or ceremony, he strode up the centre of the hall, mounted the steps of the throne, and, standing beside the King's chair, bent down his head, addressing John in a low and seemingly angry whisper.

His coming, and the bold and irreverent manner in which he approached the King, seemed to destroy at once the ceremony of the court. The heart of almost every noble present was swelling with indignation at the assassination of the unhappy Arthur, then already public, and by most persons said to have been committed by the King's own hand ; and now, encouraged by the bold anger evident on the brow of John's natural brother, they broke the circle they had formed, and in a close group, spoke together eagerly ; while William Longsword continued to pour upon the blood-thirsty tyrant on the throne, a torrent of stern reproaches, the more cutting and bitter, from the under-tone in which he was obliged to speak them.

For the reproaches John little cared ; but his eye glanced terrified to the disturbed crowd of his nobles. He knew himself detested by every one present : no one, but one or two of his servile sycophants, was attached to him by any one tie on which he could depend. He knew what sudden and powerful resolutions are often taken in such moments of excitement ; and, as he marked the quick and eager whisper, the flashing eyes, and frowning brows of his angry barons, he felt the crown tremble on his head. It was in the kindly feeling and generous heart of his bastard brother alone, that he had any confidence ; and grasping the Earl's hand, without replying to his accusation, he pointed to the group beside them, and cutting across the other's whisper, said in a low voice, “ See ! see, they revolt ! William, will you too abandon me ? ”

The Earl glanced his eyes towards them, and instantly comprehended the King's fears. “ No,” said he, in a louder voice than he had

hitherto spoke. “No! I will not abandon you, because you are my father’s son, and the last of his direct race; but you are a —.” The Earl bent his lips to John’s ear, and whispered the epithet in a tone that confined it to him to whom it was addressed. That it was not a very gentle one, seemed plain, from the manner in which it was given and which it was received; but the Earl then descended the steps of the throne, and, passing into the midst of the peers, grasped Lord Pembroke and several others, one after the other, by the hand.

“Pembroke!” said he. “Arundel! I pray you to be calm. ’Tis a bad business this, and must be inquired into at another time, when our minds are more cool, to take counsel upon it. But be calm now, I pray you all, for my sake.”

“For your sake!” said the Earl of Pembroke, with a smile. “By Heavens! Salisbury, we were just saying, that the best king that

ever sat on the English throne was a bastard ; and we see not why another should not sit there now. Why should not Rosamond of Woodstock produce as good a son as the mother of William the Conqueror ?”

“ Hush ! hush !” cried Salisbury quickly, at the pointed allusion to himself. “ Not a word of that, my friends. I would not wrong my father’s son for all the crowns of Europe. Nor am I fit for a king ; but no more of that ! Form round again, I pray you ; for I have a duty to perform as a knight, and would fain do it decently, though my blood was up with what I heard on my arrival.”

The barons again, with lowering brows and eyes bent sternly on the ground, as if scarce yet resolved in regard to their conduct, formed somewhat of a regular sweep round the throne, while Lord Salisbury advanced, and once more addressed the weak and cruel Monarch, who sat upon his throne, the most abject thing that earth can ever produce—a despised and detested king.

“ My Lord,” said William Longsword, almost moved to pity by the sunk and dejected air that now overclouded the changeable brow of the light Sovereign. “ When we parted in Touraine, I yielded to your importunity my noble prisoner, Sir Guy de Coucy, on the promise that you would cherish and honour him, and on the pretence that you wished to win him and attach him to your own person ; reserving to myself, however, the right of putting him at what ransom I pleased, and demanding his liberty when that ransom should be paid. How much truth there was in the pretence by which you won him from me, and how well you have kept the promise you made, you yourself well know ; but on my honour, to do away the stain that you have brought upon me, I would willingly free the good Knight without any ransom whatever, only that he himself would consider such a proposal as an insult to a warrior of his high fame and bearing. However that may be, I have fixed his ransom at seven thousand crowns of gold ; and here stands his

page ready to pay the same, the moment that his lord is free. I therefore claim him at your hands ; for, though I hear he is in that fatal tower, whose very name shall live a reproach upon England's honour for ever, I do not think that the man lives who would dare to practise against the life of *my* prisoner."

" My Lord of Salisbury," replied John, raising his head, and striving to assume the air of dignity which he could sometimes command ; but as he did so, his eyes encountered the stern bold look of William Longsword, and the fixed indignant glances of his dissatisfied nobles ; and he changed his purpose in the very midst, finding that dissimulation, his usual resource, was now become a necessary one. " My Lord of Salisbury," he repeated, softening his tone, " thou art our brother, and should at least judge less harshly of us than those who know us less. A villain, construing our commands by his own black heart, has committed within the walls of this town a

most foul and sacrilegious deed, and many wilful and traitorous persons seek to impute that deed to us. Now, though it becomes us not, as a king, to notice the murmurs of every fool that speaks without judgment ; to you, fair brother, and to any of our well-beloved Nobles of England, we will condescend willingly to prove that our commands were the most opposite. This we will fully show you, on a more private occasion.”

As John spoke, and found himself listened to, he became more bold and proceeded. “ In regard to our own time, during that unhappy day, which deprived us of our dear nephew, we could, were we put to such unkingly inquisition, account for every moment of our time. The greater part—nay, I might almost say the whole—was spent in reading despatches from Rome and Germany with my Lords of Arundel and Bagot.”

“ Except two hours in the morning, my Lord, and from six till nine at night, when I

returned and found you wondrous pale and agitated," replied Lord Bagot with a meaning look.

" Our excellent friend, and very good knight, William de la Roche Guyon, was with us at both the times you speak of," said the King, turning towards the young Provençal, who stood near him, with a gracious and satisfied air. " Was it not so, fair Sir ?"

" It was, my Lord," faltered William de la Roche Guyon ; " but—" All the barons, at the sound of that *but*, fixed their eyes upon him, as if the secret was about to transpire ; but John took up the sentence as he hesitated to conclude it.

" But,—you would say," proceeded the King,—" you went with me to the tower, where the poor child was confined, in the morning. True you did.—'Tis true, my Lords. —But did you not hear me severely reproach the Captain of the Tower for placing the Sire de Coucy and the Duke of Brittany in one

small apartment, to the injury of the health of both?—and did I not dismiss him for not lodging them better? Then again, after vespers, did you ever see me quit the palace? Speak, I charge you;” and he fixed his eye sternly on the effeminate face of the young Knight.

Guillaume de la Roche Guyon turned somewhat pale, but confirmed the King’s statement; and John went on, gathering confidence and daring as he proceeded. “ This is enough for the present moment,” said he: “ we will more of it hereafter; but when our exculpation shall be complete, woe to him who shall dare to whisper one traitorous word upon this score! In regard to your prisoner, my Lord of Salisbury; before putting him at liberty, we would fain—”

“ Nothing before putting him at liberty! my Lord,” said the Earl, in a stern voice. “ The prisoner is mine; I have agreed upon his ransom. Here stands his page ready to pay the

sum, and, moreover, whatever charges may be incurred in his imprisonment ; and I demand that he be delivered to me this instant."

" Well, well, fair brother," answered John, " be it as thou wilt. I will despatch the order after dinner '

" Haw ! haw !" cried somebody from the bottom of the hall.—" Haw ! haw ! and perhaps De Coucy may be despatched before dinner."

" By my knighthood ! the fool says true," cried the blunt Earl.—" My Lord, as we have too fatal a proof that mistakes in commands lead to evil effects within the walls of a prison, by your leave, we will liberate this good Knight without farther delay. I will go myself and see it done."

" At least," said the King, " to keep up the seeming of a respect, that you appear little inclined to pay in reality, Earl of Salisbury, take a royal order for his release.—Clerk, let one be drawn.'

The clerk drew the order, and John read it

over, with a degree of wilful slowness that excited not a little Lord Salisbury's suspicions. At length, however, the King concluded ; and, having signed it, he gave it to the Earl, saying, “ There, deliver him yourself if you will—and God send he may have eaten his dinner !” muttered the King to himself, as William Long-sword took the paper, and turned with hasty steps to give it effect. “ William !—William of Salisbury !” cried John, before the other had traversed half the hall. “ Which is the Page ? Shall he count out the ransom while you are gone ? ”

“ That is the Page,” said the Earl, turning unwillingly, and pointing to Ermold de Marcy, who, accompanied by a herald and Gallon the Fool, with two men-at-arms, bearing bags of money, stood at the farther end of the hall, in which the strange and painful scene we have endeavoured to describe had taken place. “ That is the Page. Let him tell down the ransom if you will. I will be back directly ; 'tis but ten

paces to the Tower.—That is the Page,” he repeated, as he saw John about to add some new question.

“ And the gentleman with the nose?” demanded the light Monarch, unable, under any circumstances, to restrain his levity. “ And the gentleman with the nose—the snout!—the proboscis!—If you love me, tell me who is he?”

But Salisbury was gone; and Gallon, as usual, took upon him to answer for himself.—“ Bless your Mightiness,” cried he, “ I am twin brother of John, King of England. Nature cast our two heads out of the same batch of clay: she made him more knave than fool, and me more fool than knave; and verily, because she gave him a crown to his head, and me none, she furnished me forthwith an ell of nose to make up for it.”

“ Thou art a smart fool, whatever thou art,” replied John, glad to fill up the time, during which he was obliged to endure the presence of his barons, and the uncertainty of what the order he had given for De Coucy’s liberation

might produce.—“Come hither, Fool;—and you, Sir Page, tell down the money, to the Secretary.—And now, Fool, wilt thou take service with me? Wouldst thou rather serve a King, or a simple Knight?”

“Haw! haw!” shouted Gallon, reeling with laughter, as if there was something perfectly ridiculous in the proposition.—“Haw! haw! haw! I am fool enough, ’tis true! But I am not fool enough to serve a King.”

“And why not?” demanded John. “Me-thinks there is no great folly in that. Why not, fellow?”

“Haw, haw!” cried Gallon again. “A King’s smiles are too valuable for me. That is the coin they pay in, where other men pay in gold. Besides, since the time of Noe downwards, kings have always been ungrateful to their best subjects.”

“How so?” asked the King. “In faith, I knew not that the patriarch had ever such a beast as thee in the ark.”

“Was not the dove the first that he turned

out?" demanded Gallon, with an affected look of mock simplicity, that called a smile upon even the stern faces of the English barons.

"Ha!" said John. "Thinkest thou thyself a dove? Thou art like it in the face, truly!"

"Not less than thou art like a lion," answered Gallon boldly. "And yet men say you had once such a relation.—Haw, haw! Haw, haw, haw!" and he sprang back a step, as if he expected John to strike him.

But for a moment, leaving the conversation, which John for many reasons continued to carry on with the juggler, though his replies were of a more stinging quality than the Monarch greatly relished, we must follow Lord Salisbury to the prison of De Coucy.

It was a little past that early hour at which men dined in that day; and when the Earl entered the gloomy vault that contained the young Knight, he found him seated by a table groaning under a repast not very usual on the boards of a prison.

De Coucy, however, was not eating, nor had he eaten, though the viands before him might well have tempted lips that had tasted little but bread and water for many months before.

“Salisbury!” exclaimed the Knight, as the Earl strode into the chamber, with haste in his aspect, and symptoms of long travel in every part of his dress.—“Salisbury! Have you come at length?”

“Hush! hush! De Coucy!” cried the Earl, grasping his hand. “Do not condemn me, without having heard. John persuaded me that he wished to win you to his cause; and promised most solemnly that he would not only treat you as a friend, but as a favourite. I am not the only one he has deceived. However, till a fortnight since, I thought he had carried you to England, as he declared he would. Your page, with wonderful perseverance, traced me out amidst all the late troubles in Touraine, and offered your instant ransom. I sent to

England to find you—my messenger returned with tidings that you were here; and, doubting false play, I set off without delay to release you. At every town of Normandy I heard worse and worse accounts of my bad brother's conduct.—Thank God, I am a bastard!—and when I come here, I learn, that that luckless boy, Arthur, is gone, God knows where, or how!"

"I will tell you where you may find him, Salisbury," said De Coucy, grasping the Earl's arm, and fixing his eyes steadily on his face: "at the bottom of the Seine. Do you mark me? At the bottom of the Seine!"

"I guessed it," replied the Earl, shutting his teeth, and looking up to heaven, as if for patience.—"I guessed it!—Know you who did it:—they say you were confined together."

"Do I know who did it?" exclaimed De Coucy: "John of Anjou! your brother! his uncle!"

"Not with his own hand surely!" exclaimed

Salisbury, drawing back with a movement of horror.

“ As I hope for salvation in the blessed cross !” replied De Coucy, I believe he did it with his own hand.—At least, full certainly, ’twas beneath his own eye ;” and he proceeded to detail all that he had heard. “ Before that day,” continued the Knight, “ I was fed on bread and water, or what was little better. Since—you see how they treat me ;” and he pointed to the table. “ I have contented myself each morning with half of one of those white loaves,” he added : “ first, because this is no place for hunger ; and next, because I would rather not die like a rat poisoned in a granary.”

The Earl hung his head for a moment or two in silence ; and then again, grasping De Coucy’s hand, he said, “ Come, good Knight, come ! Deeds gone cannot be amended. They are tumbled, like old furniture, into the great lumber-house of the past, to give place to newer things, some better and some worse.

You were a prisoner, but now—you are now free; and believe me, on my honour, I would rather have laid my sword-hand upon a block, beneath an axeman's blow, than that my noble friend should have undergone such usage ;—but come, your ransom by this time is told down, and your attendants wait you in the palace hall. First, however, you shall go to my lodging in Rouen, and do on my best haubert and arms. There are horses in my stables, which have stood there unridden for months. Take your choice of them ; and God speed you ! for, though it be no hospitable wish, I long to see your back turned on Normandy."

De Coucy willingly accepted the Earl's courtesy, and followed down the stairs of the prison into the open air. He trod with the proud step of a freeman : the sight of living nature was delight ; the fresh breath of heaven a blessing indeed ; and when he stood once more, clothed in shining arms, he felt as if the bold spirit of his youngest days had come back with redoubled force.

As they proceeded to traverse the space which separated the lodging of the Earl of Salisbury from the ducal palace, William Longsword proceeded to give De Coucy a short account of all the steps which his page had taken to effect his liberation, and which, however brief, we shall not repeat here; it being quite sufficient to the purposes of this history, that the Knight was liberated.

Salisbury and De Coucy mounted the stairs of the palace with a rapid pace; but, at the hall door, they paused for a single moment: “Salisbury!” said De Coucy, with a meaning tone, “I must do my duty as a Knight!”

“Do it!” replied the Earl with firm sadness, understanding at once the young Knight’s meaning.—“Do it, De Coucy—God forbid that I should stay a true Knight from doing his *devoir*!”

So saying, he led the way into the hall.

John was still jesting with Gallon the Fool. The barons were standing around, some silently listening to the colloquy of the King and

the juggler, some speaking together in a low voice. At a table, on one side of the hall, where sat the secretary, appeared De Coucy's page, Ermold de Marcy, with a herald ; and, on the board between him and the clerk, lay a large pile of gold pieces, with the leather bags which had disgorged them, while one of the men behind, held a similar pouch, ready to dispose of its contents as need might be.

De Coucy advanced to the table, and welcomed his page with an approving smile, while the herald cried in a loud voice to call attention : “ Oyez, Oyez ! Hear, hear !” and then tendering the ransom in set form, demanded the liberation of Sir Guy de Coucy. The ransom was accepted with the usual ceremonies, and a safe conduct granted to the Knight through the territories of the King of England ; which being done, De Coucy advanced from the table up the centre of the hall.

What had before passed had taken place at such a distance from the throne, that John

found it no difficult matter to keep his eyes in another direction, speaking with William de la Roche Guyon, as Gallon the Fool had left him on his lord's entrance, and was standing by the table, his nose, at the same time, wriggling with most portentous agitation, as he saw the gold delivered by the page, and taken up by the secretary. The Monarch had thus affected scarcely to see the young Knight; but now De Coucy advanced directly towards him, accompanied pace by pace by the herald, who, with that sort of instinctive knowledge of every chivalrous feeling, which the officers of arms in that day are said to have possessed, took a quick step forward as they neared the throne, though without any command to that effect; and exclaimed in a loud tone,—“ Hear ! John, King of England ! Hear !”

John looked up, and turned a frowning brow upon De Coucy. But the Knight was not to be daunted by fierce looks, even from a King; and he proceeded boldly and in a slow distinct

voice. “ John of Anjou ! False traitor, and assassin ! I, Guy de Coucy, Knight, do accuse you here in your palace, and on your throne, of the murder of your nephew, Arthur Plantagenet, rightful King of England, and to your beard I call you mansworn, traitor, murderer, and felon—false knight, discourteous gentleman, and treacherous king ! Moreover, whoever does deny the murder of which I here accuse you, I give him the lie, and will prove it, my hand against his, according to the law of arms.”

“ Have I so many barons and noble knights around me,” cried John, “ and not one of them noble and brave enough to repel the insults offered to their King, in their presence, by this braggart Frenchman ?”

Several of the circle stepped forward, and De Coucy cast down his glove for him to take that chose ; but Lord Pembroke waved his hand, exclaiming, “ Hold, Lords, and Knights ! hold ! We must not make ourselves champions

of a bad cause. Such is not the courage of true knights.—My Lord, the King! the Nobles of England have ever been found too willing to cast away their lives and fortunes in their King's defence; and there is not one man in this presence, that, give him a good cause, and he would not meet in arms the best Frenchman that ever was born. When, therefore, my Lord, you shall satisfactorily have proved that this charge against you is false, the swords of a thousand British knights will start from their sheaths to avenge your quarrel, and I, as your Lord Marshal, claim to be the first.”

“With all respect, my Lord de Coucy,” he added, while John bit his lip with bursting mortification, “I raise your glove, and pledge myself to meet you in arms within three months, if I find cause to judge your words bold and untrue. If not, I will yield the gage to whatever true knight can, on his conscience, meet you, or will render it back unto you honourably, in default of such. I am right willing,

ever to do battle with a brave man; but I could never fight, with the ghost of Arthur Plantagenet crying that my cause was evil."

So saying, he raised the glove, and De Coucy, darting a glance of bitter scorn at John, bowed his head to Lord Pembroke, and proceeded down the hall to the place where he had left William Longsword. The Earl, however, had not stayed to hear the accusation that he knew was about to be launched at his brother, and which, as he could not refute, he dared not resent.

De Coucy found him on the steps of the palace, at the bottom of which stood a fresh horse, prepared for himself, together with the beasts of Ermold the Page, the Herald, Gallon the Fool, and the two men-at-arms, who had carried the money to pay the Knight's ransom. To these were added the escort of a body of horse archers, to guard the young Knight safe through the English territory. This, however, he declined; and, grasping the

hand of the Earl of Salisbury, between whose bosom and his own existed that mutual esteem which all noble minds feel towards each other, he sprang upon his horse, and galloped with all speed out of Rouen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE road that De Coucy followed had been made, apparently, without the least purpose of proceeding straight to Paris, though it ultimately terminated there ; but its object seemed more particularly to visit every possible place on the way, without leaving the smallest village within several miles of the direct line to complain of being neglected. Thus, instead of cutting off angles, and such other whimsical improvements of modern days, it proceeded along the banks of the river, following, with a laudable pertinacity, all the turnings and windings thereof.

This sort of road, which uncommonly resembles the way in which I have been obliged to

relate this most meandering of histories, is doubtless very agreeable when you have plenty of time to stay and amuse yourself with the pleasures of this prospect or that—to get off your horse to gather a flower upon the bank—to pause under the shadow of a tree, and pant in concert with your beast in the cool air; but when you are in a hurry, then is the time to bless modern short cuts. Such must be my case; for, having a long way before me, and a short space to do it in, I must abridge De Coucy's journey as much as possible; and, only staying to relate two events which occurred to him on the road, must hasten to bring him, together with my other characters, to that one point to which all their histories are tending.

Passing over, then, the follies of Gallon the Fool, who, notwithstanding all his maniac malice, felt he knew not what of joy at his Lord's deliverance; and all the details given by Er-mold de Marcy concerning his various pere-

grinations and negotiations, together with the young Knight's joyful feelings on his liberation, and his sorrowful ones at the accounts he heard of the unhappy Count d'Auvergne, we will bring the whole party at once to that high hill from which the lower road to Paris descends rapidly on the little, dirty, old-fashioned town, called the *Pont de l'Arche*.

There being few things more uncertain in the world than the smiles of beauty and the boundaries of kingdoms, the limits of France, which have been here, and there, and every where, within the last few centuries, were fixed, on the precise day I speak of, at the Pont de l'Arche. That hill being then the extreme limit of King John's Norman dominions, his deputy *Prévôt*, John of Wincaunton, was, at the very moment *De Coucy* and his followers arrived at the summit of the hill, engaged in the very praiseworthy occupation of hanging the *Brabançois*, *Jodelle*, to one of the highest elms in the land.

It must not, however, be inferred that the hanging had actually commenced ; for, though the *Prévôt*, with a party of six or seven men, very well calculated to hang their neighbours, stood round Jodelle under the tree, while one of their companions fastened the end of a thick noose tightly to one of the strongest branches ; yet the plunderer's neck was still free from that encumbrance so fatal to persons of his profession.

There are various sorts of bravery ; and Jodelle was a brave man, of a certain sort. He had never shown himself afraid of death ; and yet, the idea of hanging affected him with mortal fear—whether he fancied that that peculiar position would be unpleasant to him, or not, can hardly be said ; but certain it is, though he had never shrunk from death in the battle field, his face looked already that of a corpse ; his limbs shook, and his teeth chattered, at the sight of the awful preparations that were carrying on around him.

What is there to which hope will not attach itself? Even the sight of De Coucy, whom he had sold to his enemies, awoke a dream of it in the breast of the Brabançois, and with pitiful cries he adjured the Knight to save him from the hands of his executioners.

The men of the *Prévôt* stood to their arms; but the Knight's reply soon showed them they had no molestation to fear from him. “Villain!” answered he, “if I saved thee from their hands, it should be but to impale thee alive! Every drop of Prince Arthur's blood cries vengeance upon thee; and, by Heaven! I have a mind to stay and see thee hanged myself!”

“Haw haw!” cried Gallon the Fool,—“Haw, haw! Beau Sire Jodelle! It strikes me, they are going to hang thee, beau Sire! Undo the haussecol of thy doublet, man. They are going to give thee one of tighter stuff.—Haw, haw, Sire Brabançois! Haw, haw! Why pray you not the Coucy again? Perchance he may be moved. Or, rather, why pray you not me? I am the

only man in the troop that can aid thee—Haw, haw, haw ! haw, haw ! I could save thee if I would !”

“Thou wouldst not if thou couldst, fiend,” replied Jodelle, glaring on him with eyes in which wrath struggled with terror, for his executioners were now actually adjusting the noose to his neck, and his pinioned hands might be seen to quiver with the agonizing anticipation of destruction. “I do now believe thee a devil indeed, as thou once toldest me, for none but the devil could mock me in such a moment as this.”

“Haw, haw, haw ! Haw, haw, haw !” roared Gallon, rolling on his horse with laughter. “Dost thou believe ? Well, then, for that I will save thee ;” and, riding up to the *Prévôt*, the juggler thrust his snout into that officer’s ear, and whispered a few words, in regard to the truth of which, the other seemed at first doubtful. Gallon, however, exclaimed, “’Tis true, thou infidel ! ’tis true ! I heard the order given myself !

Look ye there!—There comes the messenger down in the valley—Haw, haw, haw! Ye fools! Thought you, King John could spare so useful a villain as that?"

The *Prévôt* gazed in the direction wherein the juggler pointed; and then made a sign to his men to put a stop to the preparations, which they were hurrying forward with most unseemly haste: while Gallon, with a patronizing sort of nod to Jodelle, and a loud laugh, rode on after De Coucy, who had not waited to listen to the termination of the eloquent conversation between the juggler and the coterel. At the bottom of the hill, however, the young Knight turned his head, never doubting that he should behold the form of his late follower dangling from the elm; but to his surprise, he perceived two of the men placing Jodelle on horseback, still apparently bound, and the rest hastening to mount their own beasts, while a horseman was seen conversing with the *Prévôt*.

"By St. Paul! if thou hast saved that fellow

from the hands of the hangman," cried De Coucy, " thou art a juggler indeed, and a mischievous one to boot, friend Gallon!"

" 'Twas not I saved him, friend Coucy," replied Gallon, who was in somewhat of a saner state of mind than usual. "'Twas our very good friend and patron, John, King of England; and I'll tell thee what, Coucy, if you ill-treat me, and thump me, as you used sometimes to do, I'll e'en take service with him, John of Anjou, and leave you!—Haw, haw! What do you think of that? Or else I'll go and live with fair William de la Roche Guyon," he added, in his rambling way. " He loves me dearly, does William de la Roche Guyon. So I'll go and live with him, when I want to better myself.—Haw, haw! Then I shall always be near the pretty Lady Isadore of the Mount, whom good King John of England gave to fair Count William this morning, for standing by him in his need, as he said. 'Twas all in a whisper; but I would have heard it had it been

twice a whisper ; my ears are as fine as my nose.

—Haw, haw !”

De Coucy had drawn his rein at the first word of these very pleasing tidings, which Gallon communicated with a broad lack-lustre stare, from which he had banished every particle of speculation ; so that, whether it was true, or false ; a dreadful reality, or an idiotic jest, was in no degree to be gathered from his countenance.

“ What is that you say ? ” cried the Knight.
“ Tell me, good Gallon, for the love of Heaven,
are you serious in your news ? ”

“ Good Gallon ! —Haw ! haw ! ” shouted the jongleur,—“ Good Gallon ! He ’ll call me pretty Gallon next ! —Haw, haw, haw ! —Coucy, you are mad ! ”

“ For God’s sake ! ” cried the Knight earnestly, “ do not drive me mad really ; but, for once, try to give me a connected answer. Say ! What was it you heard that traitorous King say to the beardless, womanly, coward, William de la Roche Guyon ? ”

“ Give you a connected answer ! ” replied Gallon, suddenly assuming an unwonted gravity. “ Why should you doubt my giving you one ? I’m not mad, Coucy ! I’ll tell you what the King said, as wisely as he that spoke it. William de la Roche, whispered he, with the face of a cat lapping a saucer-full of cream—William de la Roche, you have stood by me this day in my need, and I will not forget it.”

And Gallon, though with a countenance as unlike that of John of Anjou, as any human face could well be, contrived to imitate the King’s look and manner, so as to leave no earthly doubt, not only that he had said what the Fool attributed to him, but that he had also precisely said it as was represented.

“ Well then,” continued the jongleur, “ the noble King bade him, fair William de Roche as aforesaid, take the fair Lady Isadore from the castle of Moulineaux, hard by Rouen, where her father, Count Julian the wise, had left her under the care of the Lady Plumdump-

ling, or some such English name; and when he had got, to carry her whither he would, as quick as possible. And the sweet potentate John, with true kingly consideration for the happiness of his lieges, added this sage counsel to the aforesaid William, namely, that if he liked, he might marry the maid; but if he liked light love better than broad lands, he might make his leman of her."

" By the Lord, Fool! if thou deceivest me, thou shalt rue it!" cried De Coucy. " I believe not thy tale! How came her father to trust her from his sight?"

" I fear me, my Lord, Gallon is right," said Ermold de Marcy, whose various negociations had somewhat rubbed off the rawness of his youth, and given him confidence to address his master more boldly. " In my wanderings about, striving to achieve your ransom, I have heard much of Count Julian and his proceedings; and I thus learned, that not long after your capture, he left the court of King John,

to raise all his vassals for the great alliance, that, men say, is forming against King Philip, leaving the Lady Isadore as a hostage for his faith, with the Lady Plymlymman of Cornouaille, chatelaine of the castle of Moulineaux. So that Gallon's tale is too likely to be true."

While the Page spoke, the Juggler drew his two eyes together upon De Coucy's countenance, watching, with a fiendish sort of pleasure, the workings of all those powerful feelings that the news he had given had cast into commotion. At length he burst into a loud laugh. "Haw haw!" cried he. — "Haw, haw, haw! De Coucy's in a rage!—Now, Coucy, now, think of the very best way of cleaving me down Guillaume de la Roche from the crest to the saddle.—Haw, haw, haw! Oh, rare! Crack his skull like a walnut-shell, and leave him no more brains than a date-stone.—Haw, haw! haw, haw!"

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was a party of travellers wound down through the beautiful valleys, and over the rich hills that lie between Pacy and Rolleboise, proceeding slowly and calmly, though with a certain degree of circumspection, as if they were not at all without their share of the apprehensions to which travellers of every kind were exposed in those days, and yet were embarrassed by the presence of some one, whose sex or age prevented them from proceeding more rapidly.

At the head of the cavalcade were seen, agitated by the breeze, various of those light habiliments which have been used in all ages to

give the female figure a degree of butterfly flutter which seems to court pursuit ; and it appeared out of consideration for the frailer limbs of the part of the troop thus clothed, that the iron-clad warriors which formed the main body proceeded at so slow and easy a pace.

The whole party might consist of fifty persons, four or five of whom, by their pennons and arms, were distinguished as knights ; while the rest showed but the sword and buckler of the squire, or the archer's quiver, long bow, and round target. Except an *éclaireur* thrown out before to mark the way, the female part of the troop took the lead ; and, as far as could be judged from appearance, the rest was but an escort attending upon them.

One of the knights, however, whose helmet nodded with plumes, and whose arms were glittering with gold, ever and anon spurred forward, and with bending head and low musical voice, addressed a few words to the fair girl who headed the troop, demanding now,

whether she was fatigued, now whether she felt the cold, now promising speedy repose, and now offering a few words of somewhat commonplace gallantry, concerning bright eyes, rosy lips, and inspiring smiles.

To his questions concerning her comfort, the lady replied briefly, and as coldly as courtesy permitted; and to his gallant speeches, the chilling unmoved glance of her large dark eye might have afforded sufficient answer, had he been one easily rebuffed. The only uncalled-for words which she addressed to him herself, tended but to ask where it was that her father had appointed to meet her; and on his replying that a place called Drocourt had been named, some five leagues farther, she relapsed into silence.

The young Knight however, though on every check he received he sunk back into himself with an air of deep despondency, still returned to his point, holding perseverance to be the most serviceable quality in the world in all

dealings with the fair ; and thus, from time to time, he continued his assiduities, notwithstanding cold looks and scanty answers ; till at length the road, descending, began to wind along the banks of the Seine.

Here his attention became more entirely directed to precautions against surprise ; and the increased haste and circumspection which he enjoined, seemed to imply that he found himself upon hostile and dangerous ground.

" See you no ferry boat," cried he, " along the river ! — Look out, Arnoul ! — look out ! We must get across as soon as may be."

" The ferry lies beyond this woody tongue of land, my Lord," replied the man. " 'Tis not half a mile hence, and there is no town between; so we may pass easily ;" and, spurring on, the party entered the pass, between the wood which skirted down from the road to the river on the one side, and the high chalky cliffs on the other.

The Knight in the gilded armour had received a fresh rebuff from the lady whose fa-

vour he seemed so anxious to win ; and, having retired to his companions, who, as we have shown, were a few steps behind, was conversing with them in an earnest but under-tone, when from an ambush in the wood, which had escaped even the eyes of the advanced scout, rushed forth a body of horsemen, with such rapid force, as to separate entirely the female part of the cavalcade from their escort.

It was done in an instant ; but, in truth, it needed such rapidity of attack to render it, in itself, any thing short of madness ; for, when the escort recovered in a degree from their first astonishment, they found that seven men formed the whole force that had thrown them into such confusion. Before, however, this became apparent, the leader of their adversaries shouting, “A Coucy ! A Coucy !” spurred like lightning upon the Knight we have before mentioned, and at one blow of his battle-axe dashed him under his horse’s feet. A squire behind shared the same fate ; a man-at-arms

followed ; and each of De Coucy's followers, fighting as if inspired by the same daring valour that animated their lord, the escort were driven back along the road, leaving four or five saddles vacant. Then, however, the tide of the battle turned. The knights at the head of the escort saw the handful of men to which they were opposed, and ashamed of yielding a step to so scanty a body, four of them united their efforts to attack De Coucy, while another rallied their followers ; and the young Knight was in turn driven back, now striking at one, now at another, now parrying the blows that were aimed at himself, and now showering them thick upon the head of the opponent that he had singled out for the moment.

Separated from the escort which attended her, the lady we have mentioned, with her women, had in the mean while endeavoured to escape from the scene of strife which had so suddenly arisen, by hurrying on upon the road ; but the scout who had turned at the

first noise of the affray caught her bridle, and, notwithstanding her prayers and entreaties, would not suffer her to proceed.

The danger indeed to which she was exposed was not for the moment great, as, by this time, the first impetuous attack of De Coucy and his followers had driven the escort back beyond the turn of the wood; and nothing could be gathered of the progress of the fight but from the trampling of the horses heard sounding this way or that, and the cries and shouts of the combatants approaching or receding as the battle turned.

“Lady Isadore! Lady Isadore!” cried a girl who followed her. “It is the Sire de Coucy. Hear you not his battle-cry? and I am sure I saw Ermold the Page strike down an archer twice as big as himself. God send them the victory!”

“Hush! foolish girl! hush!” cried Isadore of the Mount, leaning her head to listen more intently.—“Hark, they are coming this way!—

Free my bridle, soldier ! Free my bridle, for the love of Heaven ! How dare you, Serf, to hold me against my will ? You will repent, whoever wins !”

The soldier, however, heeded neither the lady’s entreaties nor her threats, though it so happened that it would have proved fortunate to himself had he done so ; for, in a moment after, De Coucy, driven back by the superior force to which he was opposed, appeared at the turn of the wood, striking a thundering blow on the crest of one of the knights who pressed closely on him, while the three others spurred after at about three horse-lengths’ distance.

No sooner had the blow descended, than the Knight’s quick glance fell upon Isadore. “Fly, Isadore, fly !” cried he. “You have been deceived into the power of traitors !—Fly ! up the path to the right ! To the castle on the hill !” but, as he spoke, he suddenly perceived the soldier holding her rein, and forcing her horse up a bank somewhat out of the current

of the fight. Like lightning, De Coucy wheeled his charger; and, disappointing, by the turn he took, a blow that one of his adversaries was discharging at his head, he swung his battle-axe round in the air, and hurled it with sure and unerring aim at the unhappy scout. It needed a firm heart and well-practised hand to dismiss such a fatal missile in a direction so near the person of one deeply beloved. But De Coucy had both; and rushing within two feet of Isadore of the Mount, the head of the ponderous axe struck the soldier full on the neck and jaw-bone, and dashed him from his horse, a ghastly and disfigured corpse.

“Fly, Isadore! fly!” repeated De Coucy, at the same moment drawing his sword and spurring his charger furiously against the first of his opponents. “Fly up to the right! The castle on the hill!—the castle on the hill!”

Isadore required no second injunction, but parted like an arrow from the scene of the battle, while De Coucy made almost more than mortal efforts to drive back the enemy.

Though he thus gave her time to escape, his valour and skill were of course in vain, opposed to numbers not inferior to himself in personal courage, and clothed in arms equal to those by which he was defended. All he could do was, to give his scattered followers time, again to collect about him ; and then, satisfied with having delivered Isadore, to keep up a defensive fight along the road.

Even this, however, was difficult to conduct successfully in the face of a body of men so much superior to his own in number, eager to avenge themselves upon him, and hurried on by the knowledge, that, being upon adverse ground, they must win their revenge quickly, or not at all. The four Knights pressed on him on all sides, striving to bear him down to the earth ; his armour was hacked and splintered in many parts ; his shield was nearly cleft in two with the blow of a battle-axe ; several of the bars of his visor were dashed to pieces, so as to leave his face nearly uncovered ; but still he retreated slowly, with his face to his enemies,

shouting from time to time his battle-cry, to cheer the spirits of his men ; and striking terrible sweeping blows with his long sword, whenever his opponents made a general rush upon him.

One of these united attacks, however, had nearly proved fatal to the gallant young Knight ; for, in suddenly backing his horse to avoid it, the animal's feet struck against a felled tree, and he went down at once upon his haunches. “A Coucy ! a Coucy !” cried the Knight, striving to spur him up ; but all four of his antagonists pressed upon him at once, beating him down with repeated blows, when suddenly two new combatants were added to the fight, Philip Augustus and the Count d'Auvergne.

Both, though we have seen them in a preceding chapter opposed hand to hand, suddenly ceased their mutual conflict, and rushed forward to strike upon the side of De Coucy. The Count d'Auvergne, warned by his friend's well-known battle-cry, rushed, bare-headed as he was, into the

midst of the struggle, and, striking with all the energy of insanity, dashed at once the foremost of the young Knight's opponents to the earth. The King, recognising instantly, by the Norman fashion of their harness, the followers of his enemy King John, sprang on his horse ; and, with the same chivalrous spirit that induced him in former days to attack King Richard's whole army near Courcelles with scarce two hundred knights in his own train, he cast himself in the foremost of the battle, and plied his weapon with a hand that seldom struck in vain.

The struggle, by its greater equality, now became more desperate ; but it was soon rendered no longer doubtful, by the sight of a body of horse coming down at full speed on the road from the castle. The Normans, who had followed Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, now hastened to effect their retreat, well knowing that whatever fresh troops arrived on the spot, must necessarily swell the party of their adversaries. They made an effort, however, in the

first place, to deliver their companion who had been struck down by the Count d'Auvergne; but finding it impossible, they turned their horses, and retreated along the line of road over which they had advanced, only pausing for an instant at the spot where the contest had first begun, to aid William de la Roche himself, who had, as we have shown, been cast from his horse by a blow of De Coucy's battle-axe; and now sat by the road-side, somewhat stunned and dizzied by his fall, and completely plundered of his fine armour.

“ Haw ! haw !” shouted some one from the top of one of the leafless trees hard by, as they remounted the discomfited cavalier. “ Haw ! haw ! haw !” and in a moment, Gallon the Fool cast down one of the gay gauntlets on the head of its former owner, laughing till the whole cliffs rang, to see it strike him on the forehead, and deluge his fair effeminate face with blood. The Normans had not time to seek vengeance; for De Coucy's party, rein-

forced by the troop from the castle, hung upon their rear, and gave them neither pause nor respite till the early night, following a day in February, closed in upon the world ; and, fatigued with so long a strife, the pursuers drew the rein, and left them to escape as they might.

So fierce and eager had been the pursuit, that scarce a word had passed between De Coucy's party and their new companions, till, by common accord, they checked their horses' speed.

It was then that the two brothers in arms turned towards each other, each suddenly grasping his friend's hand, with all the warmth of old affection. “ D'Auvergne ! ” cried De Coucy, gazing on his friend's face, down which the blood was streaming from a wound in his temple, giving to his worn and ashy countenance, in the twilight of the evening, an appearance of scarcely human paleness.

“ De Coucy ! ” replied D'Auvergne, fixing

his eyes on the broken bars of the young Knight's helmet. "De Coucy!" he repeated; and, turning away his head with a look of painful consciousness, he carried his hand to his brow, as if sensible of his infirmity, adding, "I have been ill, my friend—the hot sun of the Desert, and Agnes' cold words when I delivered her father's message—a message I had sworn on my knighthood to deliver—"

"Ha! Then it was not"—cried Philip eagerly: "but let us return to some place of repose!" added he, remembering his disguise, and cutting across a topic which, besides being painful to himself, he loved not to hear canvassed near the ears of strangers. "Let us return to some place of repose.—We have to thank you, Sir Knight," he added, turning to the leader of the horsemen who had joined them from the castle—"we have to thank you for your timely aid."

"Not so, beau Sire," replied the Knight, bowing to his saddle-bow. "We were warned

of the strife by a lady, who claimed refuge in the castle ; and we instantly came down to strike for France."

" You did well !" replied the King.—" Hark, you, Sir Knight ;" and approaching his horse, he spoke for some moments to him in an under-voice, to which the only reply was, " You shall be obeyed."

In the mean while, the men-at-arms and the followers of De Coucy, who had paused to breathe after the first heat of the affray, began to mingle in conversation upon the events that had just taken place, and the causes which had given rise to them ; and very soon all the noise and clamour of explanation, and wonderment, and questioning, and boasting succeeded, which usually follows any very active struggle. In the course of this hubbub, De Coucy's name, situation, quality, the news he had heard concerning Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, and the means he had taken to surprise him, and deliver the Lady Isadore, were explained to every

body whom it might concern, with that almost childish frankness and simplicity, which was one of the chief characteristics of the age of chivalry.

To this the King listened attentively ; and then, turning to De Coucy, he said, “ Sir Guy de Coucy, this adventure, which you have just achieved, is worthy of your other exploits ! I will beg leave to ride with your train to Paris, where doubtless you are going. —This good Knight,” he added, pointing to the leader of the troop from the castle, “ informs me, that the lady your good sword has delivereded from that traitor Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, is in safety with the fair Queen Agnes, and he adds, that it is the Queen’s will, that no man, except the garrison of the castle, shall be admitted within the walls.”

“ If such be the case, I must submit of course,” replied De Coucy ; “ and yet I would fain speak but a few words to the Lady Isadore, to inform her why I attacked her escort ;

for, beyond all doubt, they lured her away from the château of Moulineaux, upon some fine pretext."

"I will take care that your conduct be rightly stated, beau Sire," replied the officer. "But as to your speaking with the lady, I fear it cannot be; for the Queen will doubtless hold her, both as a liege vassal of the crown, and as hostage for her father's faith; and she has vowed, that during her absence from our noble Lord the King, no man shall enter her gates, except such persons as the King himself has placed about her. Be assured, however, Sir Knight, that the lady shall receive all honourable treatment, and that your high deeds and noble prowess shall be spoken of in becoming terms."

De Coucy mused a moment. "Well," said he at length; "what must be, must be! To Paris then! for I bear the King both sad and important news."

"Ha?" cried Philip; but then again re-

membering his disguise, he added,—“ Are they such as a stranger may hear ?”

“ They are such, Sir Unknown Knight,” replied De Coucy, “ as will be soon heard of far and wide. But the King’s ears must be the first to hear my tale.—D’Auvergne,” he added, turning to the Count. “ I pray you, let my Page bind up that gash upon your temple. If I see rightly by this pale light, the blood is streaming from it still. Let him staunch it for thee, I pray !”

“ Not so, not so ! good friend,” replied the Count, who, while this conversation had been passing amongst the rest, had been leaning silently against an oak, with his eyes bent thoughtfully upon the ground,—“ not so ! It does me good. Methinks, that every drop which trickles down, and drops on the dust at my feet, takes some of the fire out of my brain. I have been mad, I fear me, De Coucy —I am not quite right yet ; but I know, I feel, that I have done this good Knight some

wrong. Pardon me, Sir Knight," he added, advancing to the King, and extending his hand,—“ pardon me, as you are a good Knight and true.”

“ I do, from my soul,” replied the Monarch, grasping the Count’s offered hand, and casting from his heart at the same moment far greater feelings of enmity than any one present knew but himself:—“ I do from my soul.—But you stagger ! you are faint !—Bind up his wound, some one ! Staunch the blood ; he has lost too much already !”

The Monarch spoke in a tone of command that soon called prompt obedience. The Count d’Auvergne’s wound was instantly bound up ; but, before the bleeding could be stopped, he fainted and in that state was borne to the cave, from which he had first issued to attack the King. Here he was laid on a bed of moss and straw, which seemed to have formed his usual couch ; and was after some difficulty recalled to animation.

De Coucy, having so far seen him restored to a state of safety, burthened with the tidings of Arthur's murder, which he was eager to announce as soon as possible to the Sovereign and Peers of France, took leave of his unhappy friend; and leaving his page and one of his men to guard and tend him, he set out with the King on the road to Paris. Two prisoners who had been taken, as well as one of De Coucy's followers severely wounded, were left in charge of the seneschal of the castle, who also undertook to see the rites of sepulture bestowed on one or two of the soldiers whose lives had been sacrificed in the affray.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE particulars of De Coucy's journey to Paris are not worth recording. He paused for two hours at a village near Meulan, with his followers and his royal companion, for the purpose of resting their weary horses; but neither of the knights took any repose themselves, though the fatigues they had undergone might well have called for it.

The conduct of De Coucy somewhat puzzled the King; for it evinced a degree of calm respect towards him, which Philip judged the young Knight would hardly have shown, had he not recognised him by some of those signs which, when seized on by a keen and observing eye, render disguises almost always abortive.

At the same time, neither by indiscreet word or meaning glance, did De Coucy betray that he had any absolute knowledge of the quality of him whose limbs that plain armour covered. He spoke frankly and freely on all subjects, started various topics of conversation himself, and, in short, took care to bound his respect to grave courtesy, without any of that formal reverence which might have directed the attention of others to what he had observed himself.

There was one, however, in the train not quite so cautious.

Gallon the Fool—though we left him last at the top of one of the highest oaks in the wood, whither he had carried, piece by piece, the rich armour he had stripped from Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, together with a well-lined pouch of chamois leather—had since taken care to rejoin the victorious party, with all his acquirements nicely bundled up on the crupper of his horse, forming a square not unlike the

pack with which wandering minstrels travelled in those days.

On the road he was very still and thoughtful. Whether it was that he was calculating in silence the value of his plunder, or that he was sullen from fatigue, his companions could not well tell; but when the party stopped, Gallon watched his opportunity when De Coucy was alone, gazing at the pale moon, and indulging in such dreams as moonlight only yields. Stealing up to his Lord, the juggler peered cunningly in his face, saying in a low voice, "Oh, Coucy! Coucy! I could show you such a trick for taming a lion;" and at the same time he bent his thumb back over his shoulder, pointing to where the Monarch stood at a few yards' distance.

"Silence, Fool!" said the Knight, in a deep stern voice, adding, a moment afterwards, "What mean you, Gallon?"

"Did you not hear him cry, "Denis Mountjoy! Denis Mountjoy!" when he joined the

fight?" demanded Gallon.—“ Coucy, Coucy ! you might tame a lion, an' you would !”

De Coucy caught Gallon by the arm, and whispered in his ear a stern menace if he kept not silence. After which he turned at once to the King, saying aloud, “ We had better to horse, fair Sir, or it will be late ere we reach the city.”

“ Haw, haw !” shouted Gallon,—“ Haw, haw !” and bounding away, he was the first in the saddle.

When they were within sight of Paris, the King thanked De Coucy for the pleasure of his fair company ; and, saying that they should doubtless soon meet at the court, he took leave of the young Knight, as if his road lay in somewhat of a different direction, and rode on, his horse putting forth all his speed to reach the well-known stable. The young Knight followed more slowly; and, proceeding across the bridge, directed his steps to the palace on the island.

In the court he found a crowd of inferior

ecclesiastics, with robes, and stoles, and crosses, and banners, and all the pompous display of Romish magnificence, mingled with the King's sergeants-at-arms, and many a long train of retainers belonging to several of the great vassals of the crown, who seemed to be at that moment at the court. The young Knight dismounted in the midst of them, and sent in to crave an audience of the King, giving his business, as it well deserved, the character of important.

A reply was soon returned, purporting that Sir Guy de Coucy was ever welcome to the King of France, and the Knight was instantly marshalled to the presence-chamber.

Philip stood at the farther extremity of the magnificent gothic hall, a part of which still remains in the old palace of the kings of France. He was habited in a wide tunic of rich purple silk, bound round his waist by a belt of gold, from which hung his sword of state. The neck and sleeves were tied with gold, and from his

shoulders descended a mantle of crimson sendal, lined throughout with ermines, which fell in broad and glossy folds upon the floor. On his head he wore a jewelled cap of crimson velvet, from under which the glossy waves of his long fair hair fell down in some disarray upon his shoulders. In any other man, the haste with which he had changed his apparel would have appeared ; but Philip, in person even, was formed to be a king ; and, in the easy grace of his figure, and the dignified erectness of his carriage, hurry or negligence of dress was never seen; or appeared but to display the innate majesty of his demeanour to greater advantage.

He stood with one foot rather advanced, and his chest and head thrown back, while his eagle eye fixed with a keen and somewhat stern regard upon a mitred prelate — the Abbot of Three Fountains Abbey—who seemed to have been speaking the moment before De Coucy entered. Guerin the Chancellor, still in the simple dress of the Knights Hospitallers, stood

beside the King ; and around appeared a small but brilliant circle of nobles, amongst whom were to be seen the Dukes of Burgundy and Champagne, the Counts of Nevers and Dampierre ; and the unhappy Count of Toulouse, afterwards sacrificed to the intolerant spirit of the Roman Church.

“ How is this ? ” said Philip, just as the young Knight passed into the hall ; — “ Will Rome never be satisfied ? Do concessions wrung from our very heart’s blood but stimulate new demands ? What has Innocent the Third to do with the wars of Philip of France against his traitorous and rebellious vassal, John Duke of Normandy ? What pretext of clerical authority and the Church’s rights has the Pontiff now to show, why a monarch should not in his own dominions compel his vassals to obedience, and punish crime and baseness ? By the Holy rood ! there must be some new creed we have not heard of, to enjoin implicit obedience, in all temporal as well as spiritual things, to

our moderate, temperate, holy Father, Innocent the Third, and his successors for ever! —We pray thee, my Lord Abbot, to communicate to us all the tenets of this blessed doctrine; and to tell us, whether it has been made manifest by inspiration or revelation."

" You speak scornfully, my son," said the Abbot mildly, " ay, and somewhat profanely ; but you well know the causes that move our holy Father to interfere, when he sees two christened Kings wasting their blood, their treasure, and their time, in vain and impious wars against each other, while the Holy Sepulchre is still the prey of miscreants and infidels, and the land of our blessed Redeemer—the land in which so many saints have died, and for which so many heroes have bled,—still lies bowed down to heathens and blasphemers,—you well know the causes that move him to interfere, I say, and therefore need ask no new motive for his christianlike and holy zeal."

" His christianlike and holy zeal ! !" ex-

claimed the King, holding up his hands.—“Ay, Abbot,” he continued, his lip curling with a bitter smile, “I do know the causes, and Christendom shall find I estimate them justly. For all answer, then, to the mild good Father Pope his exhortation to peace, I reply, that Philip is King of France; and that, though I will, in all strictly ecclesiastical affairs, yield reverence and due submission to the Supreme Pontiff; yet when he dares—ay, when he dares, —Abbot, to use the word *command* to me, in my just wars, or in the dispensation of justice unto my vassals, I shall scoff his idle threats to scorn, and, by God’s will, pursue my way, as if there were neither priest nor prelate on the earth.—Now, fair Sir Guy de Coucy! most welcome to Philip of France!” he continued, abruptly turning away from the Abbot and addressing the young Knight. “We were arming even now to march to deliver you and our fair cousin Arthur Plantagenet. What cheer do you bring us from him?”

"I had hoped, my Liege," replied De Coucy, with a pained and melancholy air, "that Fame, who speeds fast enough in general to bear ill news, would have spared me the hard and bitter task of telling you what I have to communicate. He for whom you inquire is no more! Basely has he been murdered in the prisons of Rouen by his own uncle, John King of England!"

Philip's brow had been cloudy before; but as the young Knight spoke, fresh shadows came quickly over it, as we see storm after storm roll up over a thundery sky. At the same time, each of the nobles of France took an involuntary step forward, and with knitted brow and eager, horrified eyes gazed upon De Coucy while he told his news.

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed the Monarch rapidly. "What would you say? Are you very sure, Sir Knight? Not with his own hand? His nephew too! His own brother's child! As noble a boy as ever looked up in the face of Heaven! Speak, Sir Knight!"

Speak ! What was the manner of his death ? Have you heard ? But be careful that each word be founded on certain knowledge, for on your lips hangs the fate of thousands !”

De Coucy related clearly and distinctly all that had occurred on the day of Arthur’s murder—all that he had seen, all that he had heard; but, with scrupulous care, he took heed that not one atom of surmise should mingle with his discourse. He painted strongly, clearly, minutely, every circumstance ; but he left his auditors to draw their own conclusions.

The nobles of France looked silently in each other’s faces, where each read the same feelings of horror and indignation that swelled in his own bosom. At the same time, the King glanced his keen eye round the circle, with a momentary gaze of inquiry at the countenances of his barons, as if he sought to gather whether the feelings of wrath and hatred which the young Knight’s tale had stirred up in his heart were common to all around.

“ Now, by the bones of the saints !” cried he, “ we will this day—nay this hour,—send a herald to defy that felon King, and dare him to the field.—Ho ! Serjeant-at-arms, bid Mountjoy hither !”

“ I have already, my Lord,” said De Coucy, “ presumed, even before bearing you this news, to defy King John before his court ; and, accusing him of this foul murder, to dare his barons—all, or any who should deny the fact,—to meet me in arms, upon the quarrel.”

“ Ha !” cried Philip eagerly. “ What said his nobles ?—Did they believe your charge ?—Did they take up your gage, Sir Knight ?”

“ It seems, Sire,” replied De Coucy, “ that the tidings of the Prince’s murder were already common amongst the English barons ; and, from what I could gather, some of their body had already charged John of Anjou with it before I came. As to my gauntlet, several of the knights stepped forward to raise it—for, to do the lords of England justice, they are never

backward to draw the sword, right or wrong—but Lord Pembroke interposed; and, taking up the gage, said that he would hold it in all honour, till the King should have cleared himself, to their satisfaction, of the accusation which I brought against him; hinting some doubt, however, that he could do so. Nevertheless, he promised either to meet me in arms in fair field of combat, or to return me my gage, acknowledging the King's quarrel to be bad."

" 'Tis evident enough!" cried the King. "The barons of England—who are ever willing to support their monarch in any just cause," he added, with a peculiar emphasis, not exactly reproachful, but certainly intended to convey to the ears on which it fell, a warning of the monarch's expectations,—" the barons of England are already aware of this hateful deed, or not one of them would for a moment hesitate to draw the sword in defence of his King.—Poor Arthur!" he continued, casting his eyes on the ground, and letting his mind

wander over the past,—“ poor Arthur ! thou wert as hopeful a youth as ever a mother was blessed withal—as fair, as engaging a boy—and now thine unhappy mother is sonless, as well as widowed. I had hoped to have seated thee on the throne of thine ancestors, and to have made thy mother’s heart glad in the sight of thy renewed prosperity. But thou art gone, poor child ! and left few so fair and noble behind.—In faith, Lords ! I could weep that boy’s loss,” continued the King, dashing a drop from his proud eye. “ His youth promised so splendidly, that his manhood *must* have proved great.—Lord Abbot,” he added gravely, turning to the Abbot of Three Fountains, “ you have marked what has passed this day—you have heard what I have heard,—and, if there needs any farther answer to him that sent you, to preach me from my purpose of punishing a rebellious vassal, tell him that John of Anjou has added murder to treachery ; and that Philip of France will never sheathe the sword,

till he has fully avenged the death of Arthur Plantagenet!"

"I have indeed heard what has passed, Sire, with horror and dismay," replied the Abbot; "but still, without at all seeking to impugn the faith or truth of this good Knight, whose deeds in defence of the Holy Sepulchre have been heard of by all men, and warrant his Christian truth—yet still he saw not the murder committed."

Philip knit his brow and gnawed his lip impatiently, glancing his eye round the circle with a scornful and meaning smile; and muttering to himself, "Roman craft,—Roman craft!"

Whether the Abbot heard it not, he took instantly a higher tone. "I irritate you, Sir King!" said he, "by speaking truth; but still you must thus far hear me. The Pope—the holy head of the common Christian Church, finding himself called upon to exert all the powers entrusted to him for the deliverance of

the Holy City of Jerusalem, has resolved that he will compel all Christian kings to cease their private quarrels, and lay by their vindictive animosities, till the great object of giving deliverance to Christ's sepulchre be accomplished."

"Compel!" cried Philip, the living lightning flashing from his eyes. "By heaven! Priest, the king he can compel to sheathe the sword of righteous vengeance out against a murderer is formed of different metal from Philip of France. So tell the Pontiff! Let him cast again the interdict upon the land if he will. The next time I pray him to raise it, shall be at the gates of Rome with my lance in my hand, and my shield upon my breast. My supplication shall be the voice of trumpets, and my kneeling the trampling of my war-horse in the courts of the Capitol.—What say ye, Barons! Have I spoken well?"

"Well! Well! Well!" echoed the Peers around, enraged beyond moderation at the Prelate's daring protection of a murderer; and

at the same moment the Duke of Burgundy laid the finger of his right-hand upon the pommel of his sword, with a meaning glance towards the King.

“ Ay, Burgundy, my noble friend ! thou art right,” said Philip ; “ with our swords we will show our freedom.—Look not scared, Sir Abbot, but know, that we are not such children as to be deceived with tales of holy wars, when the question is, whether a murderer shall be punished. Away with such pretences ! This war against the assassin of my noble boy, Arthur of Brittany, is *my* holy war, and never was one more just and righteous.—Ha, Mountjoy !” he added, as the King of Arms entered, “ we have a task for thee, fitted for so noble a knight and so learned a herald. John of Anjou has murdered Arthur Plantagenet, his nephew, in prison. Here stands in witness thereof, Sir Guy De Coucy—”

“ Good knight and noble ! if ever one lived,” said the Herald, bowing his head to De Coucy.

"Go then to the false traitor John," continued the King, "defy him in our name! tell him that we will have blood for blood; and that the death of all the thousands which shall fall in his unrighteous quarrel, we cast upon his head. Tell him, that we will never sheathe the sword, so long as he possesses one foot of ground in France; and that when we have even driven him across his bulwark of the sea, we will overleap that too, and the avenging blade shall plague him at his very hearth.— Yet hold!" cried Philip, pausing in the midst of the passion into which he had worked himself, and reining in his wrath, to guide it in the course of his greater purposes; as a skilful charioteer bends the angry and impetuous fire of his horses, to whirl him on with more energetic celerity to the goal within his view. "Yet hold!— — — —" and Philip carried his hand to his brow, catching, as by inspiration, the outline of that bright stroke of policy which, more than any other act of his whole reign,

secured to the monarchs of France the absolute supremacy of their rule—the judgment of John of Anjou, the greatest feudatory of the crown, by the united Peers of France.

If he made the war against John a personal one between himself and the King of England, he might be supported by his barons, and come off victorious in the struggle, it was true; but if he summoned John, as Duke of Normandy, to receive judgment from his sovereign court in a case of felony, it established his jurisdiction over his higher vassals, on a precedent such as none would ever dare in after-years to resist. It did more; for, if John was condemned by his peers, of which Philip entertained not a moment's doubt, the barons of France would be bound to support their own award; and the tie between them and him would become, not the unstable one of voluntary service rendered and refused as caprice might dictate, but a strictly feudal duty with which all would be interested to comply.

Philip saw, at a glance, the immense increase of stability which he might give to his power by this great exercise of his rights ; and, clear-sighted himself, he hardly doubted that his barons would see it also, and perhaps oppose his will. Certain, however, that by the feudal system his right to summon John, and judge him in his court, was clear and undeniable, he resolved to carry it through, at all events ; but determined, first, to propose it to his nobles as a concession that he himself made to their privileges.

What is long and tedious, as the slow eye or slower pen travels over the paper, is but the work of a moment to the mind ; and Philip had, in the pause of one brief instant, caught every consideration that affected the idea before him, and determined upon his line of conduct.

“ Hold ! ” said he to the herald,—“ hold ! — My Lords,” he continued, turning to the nobles, by whom he was surrounded. “ In my first wrath against this base murderer, I had forgot

that, though I have the indisputable right of warring upon him as a monarch, yet I cannot justly punish him as a felon, strictly speaking, without your judgment previously pronounced upon him. I would not willingly trespass upon the privileges of any of my noble vassals ; and therefore, Lords,— you Dukes of Burgundy and Champagne, and whatever other Peers of France are present, I resign the judgment of this John of Anjou into your hands. I will summon him to appear before my court of Peers, at the end of twenty days, to answer the charges brought against him. The Peers of France shall judge him according to their honour and his demerits ; and I will stand by in arms, to see that judgment executed.”

The Peers of France could hardly have refused to assist at the trial to which Philip called them, even had they been so willed ; but, far behind the Monarch in intellect, and indignant at the baseness of John of Anjou, they now eagerly expressed their approval of the King’s

determination ; and again plighted themselves to support him in his war against the English sovereign, whether that war was maintained as a consequence of the judgment they should give, or as a continuation of that which had already commenced.

The herald, then, was instantly dispatched to Rouen, for the purpose of displaying the articles of accusation against John at the court of Normandy, and of summoning him to appear on the twentieth day at Paris, to answer the charges to be there substantiated. At the same time, the Legate of the Holy See, very well convinced that, in the present case, the thunders of the Church would fall harmless at the feet of Philip, though launched with ever so angry a hand, took leave of the Monarch with a discontented air ; and as he left the hall, the Monarch's lip curled, and his eye lightened, with a foretaste of that triumph which he anticipated over the proud priest who had so darkly troubled the current of his domestic happiness.

“ Beau Sire de Coucy,” said the King, turning to the young Knight with a bland smile, as he recalled his thoughts from the contemplation of the future, “ notwithstanding the sad news you have brought us, you are most welcome to the court of France. Nor will we fail to repay your sufferings, as far as our poor means will go. In the mean while, we beg of you to make our palace your home till such time as, with sounding trumpets and lances in rest, we shall march to punish the assassin of Arthur Plantagenet. Then shall you lead, to aid in the revenge I know you thirst to take, all the fair host raised on the lands of the Count de Tanckerville, full a thousand archers and two hundred knights.—At supper, noble Lords,” continued the King, “ I trust that all here will grace my board with their presence. Ere then, I have a bitter task to perform—to break to a fond mother the death of her noble boy, and to soothe the sorrows of a helpless widow ?”

CHAPTER IX.

ONE unchanging cloud of perpetual sorrow lowered over the days of the unhappy Agnes de Meranie. The hope that the council which had been called to decide upon the King's divorce might pronounce a judgment favourable to her wishes, dwindled gradually away, till its flickering uncertain light was almost more painful than the darkness of despair. The long delays of the Church of Rome, the tedious minutiae of all its ceremonious forms, the cavillings upon words, the endless technicalities, however sweet and enduring was her disposition, wore her mind and her frame, and she faded away like a rose at the end of summer, dropping leaf by leaf towards decay.

She delighted no longer in things wherein she had most joyed. The opening flowers of the spring, the chanting of the wild melodious birds, the reviving glow of all Nature's face after the passing of the long, chill winter, brought her no happiness. Her heart had lost its young expansion. Her eyes were covered with a dim, shadowy veil, that gave its own dull, sombre hue to all that she beheld. Her ears were closed against every sound that spoke of hope, or pleasure, or enjoyment. Her life was one long, sad dream, over joys passed away, and happiness never to return.

For many and many an hour, she would wander about through the woods; but when she saw the young green leaves opening out from the careful covering with which Nature had defended their infancy, she would recall the time when, with her beloved husband, she had watched the sweet progress of the spring, and would weep to find him no longer by her side, and to see in the long, cold future an unchanging prospect of the same dull vacancy. Often,

too, she would stray to the top of one of the high hills near the castle, and, gazing over the wide-extended view — the sea of woods waving their tender green heads below her—the mingling hills, and valleys, and plains beyond—the windings of the broad river, with the rich, rich vale through which it flows—and the distant gleams of towers and spires scattered over the fair face of the bright land of France, she would sigh as she looked upon the proud kingdom of her Philip, and would quickly shrink back from the wide extension of the scene to the small limit of her heart's feelings and her individual regrets.

She shrunk, too, from society. Her women followed, but followed at a distance ; for they saw that their presence importuned her ; and it was only when any message arrived from the King, or any news was brought concerning the progress of his arms, that they broke in upon her reveries. Then, indeed, Agnes listened as if her whole soul was in the tale ; and she made

the narrators repeat over and over again every small particular. She heard that one castle had fallen—that another district had submitted—that this baron had come over to the crown of France—or that city had laid its keys at the feet of Philip, dwelling on each minute circumstance both of warfare and of policy, with as deep and curious an interest as if her life and hope had depended on the issue of each particular movement.

It was remarked too, that the oftener the name of Philip was repeated in the detail, the more interest she appeared to take therein, and the more minute was her questioning ; and if any eminent success had attended his arms, it would communicate a gleam of gladness to her eyes, that hardly left them during the whole day.

At other times she spoke but little, for it seemed to fatigue her ; and, though from the blush of her cheek, which every evening seemed to come back brighter and brighter, and from a

degree of glistening splendour in her eye, which grew more brilliant than it had ever been even in her happier days, her women augured returning health, yet her strength visibly failed; and that lovely hand, whose small but rounded symmetry had been a theme for half the poets of France, grew pale and thin, so that the one loved ring nearly dropped from the finger round which it hung.

It was not from a love of new things or new faces, for no one was more constant in all her affections than Agnes de Meranie; but though she avoided even the society of her own immediate followers, several of whom had attended upon her in her own land, yet Isadore of the Mount, from the time she had taken refuge in the castle where she was still detained by royal order, was often welcomed by the Queen with a smile that the others could not win.

Perhaps the secret was, that Isadore never tried to console her—that she seemed to feel that the name of comfort under such circum-

stances was but a mockery ; and though she strove, gently and sweetly, to divert the mind of the unhappy Princess from the immediate subject of her grief, she did it by soft degrees, and never sought for a gaiety that she did not feel herself, and which she saw was sadly discordant with all the feelings of the Queen when affected by others in the hope of pleasing her.

One morning, towards the end of March, on entering the apartments of the Queen, Isadore found her with her head bent over her hand, and her eyes fixed upon the small circle of gold that had bound her to Philip Augustus, while drop after drop swelled through the long lashes of her eyelids, and fell upon the ring itself. Seeing that she wept, Isadore was about to retire ; for there is a sacredness in grief such as her's, that a feeling heart would never violate.

The Queen, however, beckoned her forward, and looking up, wiped the tears away. " One must be at a sad pitch of fortune, Isadore," said she with a painful smile, at her own me-

lancholy conceit,—“one must be at a sad pitch of fortune, when even inanimate things play the traitor and leave us in our distress. This little magic symbol,” she continued, laying one finger of the other hand upon the ring,—“this fairy token, that in general is destined to render two hearts happy or miserable, according to the virtue of the giver and the receiver—it has fallen from my finger this morning, though it has been my comfort through many a sorrow.—Is not that ominous, Isadore?”

“Of nothing evil, I hope, Lady,” replied Isadore. “Trust me, ’tis but to show that it will be put on again under happier auspices.”

“’Twill be in Heaven, then,” replied Agnes, fixing her eyes on the thin fair hand which lay on the table before her. “’Twill be in Heaven, then!—Do you too deceive yourself, Lady?—Isadore, Isadore! the canker-worm of grief has not only eaten the leaves of the blossom, it has blasted it to the heart. I would not die if I could avoid my fate, for it will give Philip pain;

but for me, Lady,—for me, the grave is the only place of peace. Care must have made some progress ere that ring, round which the flesh once rose up, as if to secure it for ever as its own, would slip with its own weight to the ground."

Isadore bent her head, and was silent ; for she saw, that to speak of hope at that moment would be worse than vain.

" I had been trying," said the Queen, clinging to the subject with a sort of painful fondness,—" I had been trying to write something to Constance of Brittany, that might console her for the loss of her poor boy Arthur. But I blotted many a page in vain, and found how hard it is to speak one word of comfort to real grief. I know not whether it was that my mind still selfishly turned to my own sorrows, and took from me the power of consoling those of others, or whether there is really no such thing as consolation upon earth ; but, still as I wrote, I found each line more calculated to sadden than to cheer. At last I abandoned the

task, and letting my hand which had held the paper drop beside me, this faithless pledge of as true a love as ever bound two hearts, dropped from my finger, and rolled away from me. Oh! Isadore, 'twas surely an evil omen! But it was not that which made me weep. As I put it on again, I thought of the day that it had first shone upon my hand, and all the images of lost happiness rose up around me like the spectres of dead friends, calling me too to join the past; and oh! how the bright and golden forms of those sunny days contrasted with the cold, hard sorrow of each hour at present. Oh! Isadore, 'tis not the present, I believe, that ever makes our misery; 'tis its contrast with the past—'tis the loss of some hope, or the crushing of some joy—the disappointment of expectation, or the regrets of memory. The present is nothing—nothing—nothing, but in its relation to the future or the past."

"How painful, then, must be that contrast to the poor Duchess of Brittany," said Isadore in

reply, taking advantage of the mention that the Queen had made of Constance, to lead her mind away from the contemplation of her own griefs. “ How bitter must be her tears for that gallant young Prince Arthur, when all France is weeping for him ! Not a castle throughout the land but rings, they say, with the tale of his murder. Not a bosom but beats with indignation against his assassin. I have just heard, that Sir Guy de Coucy, who was his fellow-prisoner, defied John Lackland in the midst of his barons, and cast down his gauntlet at the foot of the very throne.—The messenger,” she added, casting down her eyes as the Queen raised her’s, for there came a certain tell-tale glow into her cheek as she spoke of De Coucy, that she did not care to be remarked,—“ the messenger you sent to the Canon of St. Berthe’s has but now returned, bringing news from Paris concerning the Court of Peers held upon the murderer, and affirming that he has refused to appear before the barons of France—at least, so says my girl Eleanor.”

The news of Arthur's death, and various particulars concerning it, had spread in vague rumours to every castle in France. Many and various were the shapes which the tale had assumed, but of course it had reached Agnes de Meranie and her suite in somewhat of a more authentic form. All that concerned Philip in any way was of course a matter of deep interest to her. Isadore's plan for withdrawing her mind for the moment from herself had therefore its full effect, and she instantly directed the messenger to be brought to her, for the purpose of learning from him all that had occurred at the Court of Peers, to which assembly, however, we shall conduct our reader in his own person.

CHAPTER X.

To those who have not studied the spirit of the feudal system, it would seem an extraordinary and almost inconceivable anomaly, that one sovereign prince should have the power of summoning to his court, and trying as a felon, another of dominions scarcely less extensive than his own. But the positions of vassal and lord were not so incoherent or ill-defined as may be imagined. Each possessor of a feof, at the period of his investiture, took upon himself certain obligations towards the sovereign under whom he held, from which nothing could enfranchise him, as far as that feof was concerned ; and upon his refusing, or neglecting to comply

with those obligations, the territory enfeoffed or granted, returned in right to what was called the capital lord, or him, in short, who granted it.

To secure, however, that even justice should be done between the vassal and the lord—each equally an interested party—it became necessary that some third person, or body of persons, should possess the power of deciding on all questions between the other two. Thus it became a fundamental principle of the feudal system, that no vassal could be judged but by his peers,—that is to say, by persons holding in the same relative position as himself, from the same superior. For the purpose of rendering these judgments, each great baron held, from time to time, his court, composed of vassals holding directly from himself; and, in like manner, the King's Court of Peers was competent to try all causes affecting the feudatories who held immediately from the crown.

John therefore was summoned to appear before the court of Philip Augustus, not as

King of England, which was an independent sovereignty, but as Duke of Normandy, and Lord of Anjou, Poitou, and Guyenne, all feofs of the crown of France. No one therefore doubted the competence of the court, and John himself dared not deny its authority.

It was a splendid sight, the palace of the Louvre on the morning appointed for the trial. Each of the great barons of France, anxious that none of his peers should outvie him in the splendour of his train, had called together all his most wealthy retainers, and presented himself at the court of the King, followed by a host of knights and nobles, clothed in the graceful flowing robes worn in that day, shining with gold and jewels, and flaunting with all the gay colours that the art of dyeing could then produce. Silks and velvets, and cloths of gold and silver, contended in gorgeous rivalry, in the courts and antechambers of the palace. Flags and pennons, banners and banderols, fluttered on the breeze; while all the most beautiful

horses that could be procured, were led in the various trains, by the pages and squire, unmounted; as if their graceful forms were too noble to bear even the burden of a prince.

In the great hall itself, the scene was more solemn, but scarcely less magnificent. Around, in the midst of all the gorgeous decorations of a royal court on its day of solemn ceremony, sat all the highest and noblest of France, clothed in those splendid robes of ermine, which, independent of any associations of their value, from the very snowy whiteness, and the massy folds into which that peculiar fur falls, gives an idea of majesty and grandeur that no other dress can convey. Each bore upon his coro-netted* brow the lines of stern and impressive

* Seldon has said that the custom of bearing coronets by peers is of late days. In this assertion, however, he is apparently mistaken, the proofs of which may be seen at large in Ducange, Dissert. xxiv. R. Hoved. 792. Hist. des Comte de Poitou, &c. The matter is of little consequence, except so far as the representation of the manners and customs of the times is affected by it.

gravity ; for all deeply felt how solemn was the occasion on which they had met, how terrible was the cause of their assembly, and how mighty would be the consequences of their decision. The feeling was near akin to awe ; and many of the younger peers scarcely seemed to breathe, lest they should disturb the silence.

In the centre, surrounded by all the insignia of royalty, upon a throne raised several steps above the hall, and covered by a dais of crimson and gold, sat Philip Augustus—a monarch indeed, in mind, in person, and in look. There was a simple bandlet of gold around his brows,* raised with *fleurs de lis*, and jewelled with fine uncut stones ; but the little distinction which existed between it and the coronets of his peers would have hardly marked the sovereign. Though personal appearance, however, is indeed no sign of dignity, either of mind or

* The closed crown was not introduced until the reign of Louis XII. or Francis I.

station, yet Philip Augustus was not to be mistaken. There was royalty in his eye and his carriage. The custom of command shone out in every line ; and though there were many noble and princely persons present, there was none like him.

On the King's left-hand stood Mountjoy, king-at-arms, holding a scroll, containing the appeal of Constance, Duchess of Brittany, to the peers of France, for the punishment of John, called unjustly—it went on to state—King of England, for the murder of Arthur Plantagenet, his nephew and born Sovereign, her son.

On the right, stood De Coucy, neither armed nor clothed in his robes as Peer, though, however small his territories, their being free and held under no one, gave him such a right ; but being there as the chief accuser of John, he sat not of course amongst those called to judge him.

Several of the peers' seats were vacant ; and, before proceeding to the immediate business on

which the Court had met, various messengers were admitted, to offer the excuses of the several barons who, either from want of power or inclination, were not present in person. The apology of most was received as sufficient; but, at the names of several, the King's brow darkened, and he turned a meaning look to his Chancellor, Guerin, who stood at a little distance.

When this part of the ceremony was concluded, Philip made a sign to the king of arms, who, having waved his hand to still a slight murmur that had been caused by the admission of the messengers, proceeded to read the petition of Constance of Brittany; and then, followed by a train of heralds and marshals, advanced to the great doors of the hall, which were thrown open at his approach; and, in a loud voice, summoned John, Duke of Normandy, to appear before the Peers of France, and answer to the charge of Constance Duchess of Brittany.

Three times he repeated the call, as a matter of ceremony ; and, between each reiteration, the trumpets sounded, and then gave a pause for reply.

At length, after a brief conversation with some persons without, the heralds returned, introducing two persons as deputies for John, who, as every one there already knew, was not, and would not be present. The one was a Bishop, habited in his pontifical robes, and the other the well-known Hubert de Burgh.

“ Sir Deputies, you are welcome,” said the King, as the two Normans advanced to the end of the table in the centre of the hall. “ Give us the cause why John of Anjou does not present himself before his Peers, to answer the charges against him?—Say, is he sick to the death? Or, does he dare deny the competence of my court?”

“ He is neither sick, Sire,” replied the Bishop, “ nor does he, as Duke of Normandy, at all impugn the authority of the Peers of

France to judge upon all questions within the limits of this kingdom."—Philip's brow relaxed.—"But," continued the Bishop, "before trusting himself in a city, and a land, where he has many and bitter enemies, he demands that the King of France shall guarantee his safety."

"Willingly," replied Philip; "let him come! I will warrant him from harm or from injustice."

"But will you equally stake your royal word," demanded the Bishop, fixing his eyes keenly on the King, as if he feared some deceit—“will you stake your royal word that he shall return safely to his own land?”

"Safely shall he return," replied the King, with a clear, marked, and distinct voice, "if the judgment of his Peers permit him so to do."

"But if the Peers condemn him," asked the Bishop, "will you give him a safe conduct?"

“ No ! by the Lord of Heaven and earth !” thundered the King.—“ No ! If his peers condemn him, he shall suffer the punishment his peers award, should they doom him to the block, the cord, or the wheel ! Their sentence shall be executed to the letter.”

“ You well know then, Sire King,” replied the Bishop calmly, “ that John, King of England, cannot submit himself to your court. The realm of England cannot be put at the disposition of the barons of France, by its King submitting to their judgment ; neither would our English barons suffer it.”

“ What is that to me ?” cried Philip. “ Because my vassal, the Duke of Normandy, increases his domains, do I, as his sovereign, lose my rights ? By Heaven’s host, no !—Go, Heralds, to the courts, and the bridges, and the highways, and summon John of Anjou to present himself before his peers !—Sir Bishop, you have done your embassy ; and, if you stay but half an hour, you shall hear the judgment of

our court, on the cause of which we have met to take cognizance."

The Bishop however, and his companion, took their leave and departed ; the Bishop bowing low, in reverence to the court ; and the stout Hubert de Burgh turning away after a calm careless glance round the peers of France, as if he had just concluded a piece of needless ceremony, of which he was heartily tired.

For a moment or two after the deputies were gone, the barons continued to converse together in a whisper, while Philip sat without speaking, glancing his quick keen eye from one countenance to another, as if he would gather beforehand the terms of the judgment they were afterwards to pronounce. Gradually, complete silence began again to spread itself over the court ; one baron after another dropping the conversation that he held with his neighbour, till all was still. There is always something awful in very profound silence ; but

when the silence of expectation on any great occasion has been prolonged for any extent of time, it becomes a sort of painful charm, which requires no small resolution to break.

Thus the peers of France, when once the stillness had completely established itself, sat without word or motion, waiting the return of the heralds, awed by the very quiet ; though many of the more timid and undecided would fain have asked counsel of those next whom they sat, had they dared to break the spell that seemed to hang over the assembly.

Many a vague doubt and many a fear attached itself to the duty they were called upon to perform ; for, even in that day, it was no small responsibility to set a world in arms, and renew that deluge of bloodshed that had so lately ceased. From time to time, under the influence of these feelings, the several peers gazed in the countenances of their fellows, to see if they were shaken by the same hesitations

as themselves. But it is ever 'the bold that lead ; and here and there scattered through the assembly, might be seen a face that turned to no one for advice or support ; but, with the eyes fixed on the ground, the brow bent, and the lips closed, seemed to offer a picture of stern determined resolution ; it was these men who decided the deliberations of the day. For their opinions all waited, and all voices followed their lead.

At length the doors of the Hall were again thrown open ; and Mountjoy, King-at-arms, presented himself, informing the court that he had summoned John of Anjou, Duke of Normandy, in the courts, on the bridges, and the highways ; and that he did not appear.

There was now a deep pause, and Philip turned his eyes to the Duke of Burgundy. He was a man of a dull, saturnine aspect, stout even to corpulency, with shaggy eyebrows over-hanging his dark eyes, but with a high, finely formed nose, and small, well-shaped mouth,

so that his countenance was stern without being morose, and striking without being handsome.

The great Baron rose from his seat, while there was a breathless silence all round ; and laying his hand upon his heart, he said in a clear stern tone, “ I pronounce John of Anjou guilty of murder and disloyalty ; I hold him a cruel and perverse traitor ; and I declare, that for these crimes, his feofs of Normandy, Anjou, Poitou, Maine, and Guyenne, are justly forfeited to his Sovereign Lord, and he himself worthy of death, upon my honour ! ”

A murmur of approbation succeeded, for a great proportion of the barons had already determined upon a similar judgment ; and those who had remained undecided, were glad of some one with whose opinion to establish their own. One after another now rose ; and, notwithstanding all the hesitation which many had felt the moment before, there was not one dissenting voice from the condemnation pronounced by the Duke of Burgundy. Had there been any

strong mind to oppose, half the peers would have followed him like a flock of sheep, but there was none; and they now all eagerly, and almost turbulently, pronounced judgment against John of Anjou, sentencing him unanimously to forfeiture of all his feofs, and every pain inflicted on high felony.

The silence was succeeded by a babble of tongues perfectly extraordinary ; but the moment after, the voice of the King was heard above the rest, and all was again hushed.

What would in the present day smack of stage effect, was in perfect harmony with the manners, habits, and feelings of those times, when a spirit unknown to us—a moving principle whose force is now exhausted, or only felt even feebly in the breasts of a few — the spirit of chivalry, impelled men to every thing that was singular and striking.

Philip rose majestically from his throne, drew his sword from the scabbard, and, advancing to the table, laid the weapon upon it naked. Then,

gazing round the peers, he exclaimed, “ To arms ! to arms ! Nobles of France, your judgment is pronounced ! ’Tis time to enforce it with the sword !—To arms ! to arms ! Lose no moments in vain words. Call together your vassals. Philip of France marches to execute your sentence against John of Anjou ; and he calls on his barons to support their award ! The day of meeting is the tenth from this, the place of *monstre* beneath the walls of Château Gail-liard ! Let cowards leave me, and brave men follow me ; and I will punish the traitor before a year be out.”

So saying, he waved his hand to his peers ; and, followed by the heralds and men-at-arms, left the hall of assembly.

The younger and less clear-sighted of the peers eagerly applauded Philip’s brief appeal ; but there was, in fact, a tone of triumph in it, which struck the more deep-thinking barons, and perhaps made them fear that they had that day consecrated a power, which might sooner or

later be used against themselves. Doubt kept them silent, however ; and they separated at once, to prepare for the campaign before them.

Philip Augustus lost no time. Scarcely had the herald carried to John of England the news of his condemnation by the Court of Peers, than every part of his dominions in France were invaded at once with an overpowering force.

Disgusted with his baseness, his treachery, and his levity, the barons of England afforded him but little aid, and the nobles of his French dominions, in most instances, yielded willingly to the King of France, who offered them friendship and protection on which they could rely. The greater towns, indeed, of Maine and Normandy still held for John, and made some show of resistance ; but what by superior force and skill in war, and what by politic concessions, before two months were over, the major part had been led to submit to Philip.

The war was of course begun, as was ever the case in those days, by hordes of plunderers

of every description, who, on the very first call to arms, inundated Normandy, pillaging, ravaging, and destroying, sparing neither sex nor age, and, by their excesses driving the people to submit willingly to the authority of the French Monarch, who alone could afford them any sufficient protection. To the towns, Philip held out the promise of being rendered free communes under royal charters; to the barons, he offered security in all their rights and privileges; and to the people, peace and safety. With these offers, and the sight of their accomplishment wherever they were accepted, on the one hand, and an immense and conquering army on the other, it is not at all wonderful that triumph should follow every where the royal standard of France.

John fled timidly into Guyenne, while the Earl of Salisbury, with small and inefficient forces, endeavoured in some degree to check the progress of the French Monarch. Battles there were none, for the inequality of the two armies

totally prevented William Longsword from hazarding any thing like a general engagement ; but sieges and skirmishes succeeded each other rapidly ; and De Coucy had now the opportunity of drinking deep the cup of glory for which he had so long thirsted.

At the head of the retainers of the Count de Tankerville, which formed as splendid a leading as any in the army, he could display those high military talents, which had always hitherto been confined to a narrower sphere. He did not neglect the occasion of doing so, and in castle and in bower, throughout all the land of France, wherever great deeds were spoken of, there was repeated the name of Sir Guy de Coucy.

In the mean while, still confined to the castle of Rolleboise, Isadore of the Mount heard, from day to day, of her lover's feats of arms ; and, though she often trembled for his safety, with those timid fears from which a woman's heart, even in the days of chivalry, was never wholly free ; yet, knowing the impulse that carried him

forward, and proud of the affection that she had inspired and that she returned, whenever the name of the young Knight was mentioned, her eye sparkled and her cheek glowed with love, and hope, and expectation.

Her father, she thought, after the base attempt made to carry her off by William de la Roche Guyon—of the particulars of which she was now fully aware—would never press her to wed so base a traitor—and who stood so fair to win the place that he had lost as Guy de Coucy? Thus whispered Hope. Fear, however, had another discourse; and perhaps she listened as often to the tale of the one, as the other.

During this time, the Count d'Auvergne had recovered from the wound he had received; and, under the care of his own attendants, who, by the clue afforded by De Coucy, had regained him, soon acquired new strength—at least, of body. It was remarked, however, that, though while suffering excessive exhaustion from loss of blood, his mind had been far more clear and

collected ; yet, in proportion as he recovered his corporeal vigour, his intellectual faculties again abandoned him. His followers, who, notwithstanding the cold sternness of his manners, loved him with true feudal attachment, kept a continual watch upon him ; but it was in vain they did so. With a degree of cunning, often joined to insanity, he contrived to deceive all eyes ; and once more made his escape, leaving not a trace by which he could be followed.

Such was the situation of all the personages concerned in this history, towards the end of the month of June ; when suddenly the Earl of Salisbury, with the handful of men who had accompanied him, ceasing to hover round the King's army, harassing it with continued skirmishes, as had been his custom, disappeared entirely, leaving all Normandy open and undefended. A thousand vague reports were instantly circulated through the camp ; but the only correct one was that which was brought

to the King's tent, as he sat writing after the march of the morning.

"Well," cried Philip, as one of his most active scouts was ushered into his presence. "What news of the Earl of Salisbury? No more, *I believe*! Give me some certainty."

"My Lord," replied the man, "I am now sure; for I saw the rear-guard of his army in full march towards Boulogne. Mocking the jargon of the Normans, I spoke with some of the men, when I found that the whole host is boon for Flanders."

"Ha! so soon!" cried the King. "I knew not that they were so far prepared."

But, to explain the King's words, we must turn to the events which had been going on without the immediate limits of France, and which, while he was striding from victory to victory within his own dominions, threatened to overwhelm him by the combination of his external enemies, with all his discontented vassals.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the wars in Normandy and Maine, John had been absent, but not inactive ; and, what by his single power he could not bring about, he resolved to accomplish by coalition. Many causes of enmity towards Philip Augustus existed amongst all the monarchs by whose territories his kingdom was surrounded, and not less amongst his own immediate vassals ; and John at once saw, that his only hope of ever regaining the feofs that Philip had wrested from him, was in joining his own power with those of every enemy of the French monarch, and hurling him, by their united efforts, from the throne.

The English Sovereign found no opposition to these schemes of policy. Otho, Emperor of Germany, had met in Philip an unceasing and irreconcileable adversary. Philip it was who had principally opposed his election; Philip it was who had raised candidate after candidate against him. Philip it was who had taken advantage of his late quarrels with the irritable Pope; and had, even after his coronation, thrown in a rival, and placed the greater part of Upper Germany in the hands of Frederic of Sicily. Otho, therefore, thirsted for vengeance; and the proposal of a general confederacy against the French monarch but fulfilled his hopes and anticipated his efforts.

Ferrand, Count of Flanders, was not less easily won to join the coalition. One of the greatest vassals of the crown of France, with territories more extensive than the royal domain itself, he had ever been jealous of Philip's increasing power, and had, by many a breach of his feudal duties, endeavoured to loosen the tie

that bound him to his sovereign. By the example of John, however, he now began to see that such breach of duty would not pass unpunished. Views of ambition, too, joined themselves to hatred and fear. He saw prospects of independence, of sovereignty, and immense territorial aggrandizement, as the infallible consequence of Philip's overthrow; and he therefore was one of the first to put his name to the confederation. So great an alliance once established, thousands of minor princes joined themselves to it, eager to share the spoil. The Dukes of Brabant and Lemburgh, the Counts of Holland, Namur, and Boulogne, whether vassals of the King of France, or not, all found some motive to unite against him, and some excuse to their own conscience, for throwing off the homage they had vowed.

In the mean time, the disaffection of Philip's vassals in the heart of his kingdom was great and increasing. The immense strides which the monarchical power had taken under his

guidance ; the very vast increase of authority they had themselves cast into his hands by their judgment against John, the extensive increase of absolute domain, which his prompt and successful execution of that judgment had given him, made each baron tremble for his own power ; while, at the same time, Philip's protection of the communes, his interference in matters of justice and general right, and the appeal he granted in his court as supreme lord against the decisions of his great vassals, made each also tremble for the stability of the feudal system itself.

John took care to encourage discontent and apprehension. A thousand rumours were spread concerning Philip's views and intentions.— Some declared that his ambitious mind would never be at peace till he had re-established the empire of Charlemagne—till he had broken the power of the barons, and wrested from their hands the administration of justice in their territories. Some said that his plans were already

formed for throwing down their strongholds, and possessing themselves of their lands ; and there was not, in fact, a report, however extravagant, that could irritate the fears and jealousies of the nobles of France against their King, that was not cunningly devised, and industriously circulated.

Some believed, and some pretended to believe ; and nothing was heard of, from all parts of the kingdom, but preparations for revolt.

In the mean while, Philip was, as we have already shown, steadily pursuing his operations against John, the more anxious for success, because he knew that one defeat would at once call the storm upon his head. He suffered himself not to be turned from the business he had in hand by threatenings of any kind, having secured what he considered sufficient support amongst his barons to repel his external enemies and punish internal rebellion. He saw too, with that keen sagacity which was one of his peculiar qualities, that passions were begin-

ning to mingle themselves in the confederacy of his enemies, which would in time weaken their efforts, if not disunite them entirely.— These passions were not those doubts and jealousies of each other, which so often overthrow the noblest alliances ; but rather that wild and eager grasping after the vast and important changes which can only be brought about by the operation of many slow and concentrating causes.

The designs of the Confederates spread as they found their powers increase. Their first object had been but to make war upon Philip Augustus. Perhaps even the original proposal extended but to curb his authority, and reduce him to the same position with his predecessors. Gradually, however, they determined to cast him and his race from the throne ; and, calculating upon the certainty of success, they proceeded by treaty to divide his dominions amongst them. Otho was assigned his part, John his, and Ferrand of Flanders claimed Paris and all the adjacent territory for himself.

All laws and customs established by Philip were to be done away, and the feudal system restored, as it had been seen a century and a half before. Various other changes were determined upon ; but that which was principally calculated to destroy their alliance, was the resolution to attack the power of the Church, and to divide its domains amongst the barons and the knights.

John had felt the lash of a Papal censure ; and, though the ecclesiastical authority had been exercised for the purpose of raising Otho to the imperial throne, he also had since experienced the weight of the Church's domination, and had become inimical to the sway by which he had been formerly supported. Nothing then was spoken of less than reducing the power of Rome, and seizing on the luxurious wealth of the clergy.

Innocent the Pope heard and trembled ; and, though he the very first had laid the basis of the confederacy against the French monarch,

he now saw consequences beyond it, that made him use every effort to stop it in its career; but it was in vain. The hatreds he raised up against Philip in his own dominions—the fears he had excited, and the jealousies he had stimulated, were now producing their fruits; and a bitter harvest they promised against himself. At the same time, as he contemplated the approaching struggle, which was hurrying on with inconceivable rapidity to its climax, he beheld nothing but danger from whatever party might prove victorious. Over the King of France, however, he fancied he had some check, so long as the question of his divorce remained undecided, and consequently the usual doubts and hesitations of the Church of Rome were prolonged even beyond their ordinary measure of delay.

The Confederation had not been so silent in its movements but that the report thereof had reached the ears of Philip Augustus. Care had been taken, however, that the imme-

diate preparations should be made as privately as possible, so that the first intimation that the troops of the Coalition were actually in the field against him, was given by the movement of the Earl of Salisbury upon Flanders.

After that moment, however, “post after post came thick as hail,” announcing the various motions of the allies. A hundred and fifty thousand men, of all nations and arms, were already assembled on the banks of the Scheld. John of England was in arms in Poitou; and more than twenty strong places had submitted to him without a stroke. Otho’s imperial banner was given to the wind; and fresh thousands were flocking to it every hour, as if his very Gothic name had called together the myriads of the North to a fresh invasion of the more civilized world.

At the same time, revolt and disaffection were manifest through every district of Languedoc; and some of the nearest relations and oldest friends of the French monarch swelled the

ranks of his enemies. Such were the tidings that every courier brought ; and such were the forces that threatened to overwhelm the kingdom of France and overthrow its throne.

It would be vain to say that Philip Augustus saw such a mighty combination against him without alarm ; but it was not the alarm of a weak and feeble mind, which yields to difficulties, or shrinks from danger. No sooner did he hear the extent to which his enemies' preparations had been carried—an extent which he had not fully anticipated—than he issued his charter, convoking the *ban* and *arrière ban* of France to meet at Soissons, and calling to his aid all good men and true throughout his dominions.

Though far inferior in number to his enemies, the force he mustered was any thing but insignificant. Then appeared the gratitude of the communes towards the king who had enfranchised them. By their charters they were bound to furnish a certain number of armed men in times of need ; but on this occasion there is

every reason to believe that they far exceeded their quota.

Nor were the nobles and the knights a few who presented themselves at the *monstre* at Soissons. Seldom had France shown so brilliant a display of chivalry ; and even their inferiority of number was more than compensated by their zeal and their renown in arms.

First passed before the Monarch, as he sat on his battle-horse surrounded by the troops of his own domains, his faithful vassal, Eudes, Duke of Burgundy, followed by all his vassals, vavassours, and knights, with a long train of many thousand archers and men-at-arms from all the vast lands of his kingly dukedom.

Next came Thibalt of Champagne, yet in his green youth, but accompanied by his uncle Philip, and a contingent of knights and soldiers that was an army in itself. Then succeeded the Counts of Dreux, Auxerre, Ponthieu, and St. Paul, each with a long train of men-at-arms. De Coucy leading the troops of Tanker-

ville, the Lords of Montmorency, of Malvoisin, St. Valary, Mareiul, and Roye, with the Viscount of Melun, and the famous Guillaume des Barres, followed after ; while the troops willingly raised by the clergy, and the long trains of archers and men-at-arms furnished by the free cities, completed the line, and formed an army of more than eighty thousand men, all bedecked with glittering banners and dancing plumes, which gave the whole that air of splendour and pageant that excites enthusiasm and stimulates hope.

The King's eyes lightened with joy as he looked upon them ; and conscious of his own great powers of mind to lead to the best effect the noble host before him, he no longer doubted of victory.

“ Now,” said he in his own breast, as he thought of all that the last few years had brought—the humiliation that the Pope had inflicted on him—the agony of his parting from Agnes—the vow that had been extorted from

him not to see her till the council had pronounced upon his divorce, if its sentence should be given within six months—the long delays of the Church of Rome, which had now nearly protracted its deliberations beyond that period—the treason which the proceedings of Innocent had stirred up amongst his vassals, mingled with the memory of torn affections and many bitter injuries,—“now! it shall be my turn to triumph. Agnes! I will soon be thine, or in the grave! and let me see the man, prelate or prince, who, when I have once more clasped thy hand in mine, shall dare to pluck it thence! Now, now!” he murmured,—“now the turn is mine!”

Detaching a part of his new-raised army to keep in check the forces of King John in Poitou, Philip Augustus, without a moment’s delay, marched to meet the chief body of the Confederates in Flanders.

All the horrors of a great and bloody warfare soon followed the bodies of plunderers and adventurers that went before the army,

burning, pillaging, and destroying every thing, as they advanced beyond the immediate territories of the King. Nothing was beheld as the army advanced, but smoking ruins, devastated fields, and the dead bodies of women and children, mingled with the half consumed carcases of cattle, and the broken implements of industry and domestic comfort. It was a piteous and sad sight to see all the pleasant dwellings of a land laid waste, the hopes of the year's labour all destroyed ; and the busy human emmets, that had there toiled and joyed, swept away as if the wing of a pestilence had brushed the face of the earth, or lying murdered on their desolate hearths.

Philip Augustus, more refined than his age, strove to soften the rigours of warfare by many a proclamation against all useless violence ; but in that day such proclamations were in vain ; and the very unsheathing of war's flaming sword scorched up the land before it struck.

In the mean while, the Imperial forces, now

swelled to more than two hundred thousand men, marched eagerly to meet the King, and about the same time, each army arrived within a few miles of Tournay.

Both chieftains longed for a battle, yet the ardour of Philip's forces was somewhat slackened since their departure from Soissons. Ferrand of Flanders and his confederates had contrived with infinite art to seduce some of the followers of the French monarch, and to spread doubt and suspicion over many others ; so that Philip's reliance was shaken in his troops, and most of the leaders divided amongst themselves.

Such continued the doubtful state of the royal army when Philip arrived at Tournay, and heard that the Emperor, with all his forces, was encamped at the village of Mortain, within ten miles of the city ; but still the King resolved to stake all upon a battle ; for, though his troops were inferior, he felt that his own superior mind was a host ; and he saw that, if the

disaffection which was reported, really existed amongst his barons, delay would but increase it in a tenfold degree.

The evening had come, all his preparations were over; he had summoned his barons to council in an hour; and, sitting in a large chamber of the old castle of Tournay, Philip had given order that he should not be disturbed.

He felt, as it were, a thirst for calm and tranquil thought. The last few months of his existence had been given up to all the energy of action; his reflections had been nothing but eternal calculation—the combination of his own movements—the anticipation of his enemy's—plans of battle and policy; and all the thousand momentary anxieties that press upon the general of a large and ill-organized army. He had thought deeply and continually, it is true; but he had not time for thoughts of that grand and extensive nature that raise and dignify the mind every time they are indulged. Though

Agnes too was still the secret object that gave life and movement to all his energies—though he loved her still with that deep powerful love that is seldom permitted to share the heart with ambition—though she, in fact, was his ambition's object, and though the battle to which he strode would, if won, place in his hands such power, that none should dare to hold her from him—yet he had scarcely hitherto had an instant to bestow on those calmer, sweeter, gentler ideas, where feeling mingles with reflection, and relieves the mind from petty calculation and workday cares. There are surely two distinct parts linked together in the human soul—feeling and thought:—the thought, that receives, that separates, that investigates, that combines;—the feeling, that hopes, that wishes, that enjoys, that creates.

Philip Augustus, however, felt a thirst for that calm reflection, wherein feeling has the greater share; and, covering his eyes with his hands, he now abandoned himself to it alto-

ther. The coming day was to be a day of bloodshed and of strife,—a day that was to hurl him from a throne, or to crown him with immortal renown,—to leave him a corpse on the cold field of battle, or to increase his power and glory, and restore him to Agnes. He thought of it long and deeply. He thought of what would be Agnes's grief if she heard that her husband, that her lover, had fallen before his enemies; and he wrung his own heart by picturing the agony of her's. Then again came brighter visions. Hope rose up and grew into expectation; and he fancied what would be her joy, when, crowned with the laurel of victory, and scoffing to shame the impotent thunder of the Roman Church, he should clasp her once more in his arms, and bid her tread upon the necks of her enemies. Ambition perhaps had its share in his breast, and his thoughts might run on to conquest yet to come, and to mighty schemes of polity and aggrandizement; but still Agnes had

therein a share. In the chariot of victory, or on the imperial throne, imagination always placed her by his side.

His dream was interrupted by a quick step, and the words, “ My Lord ;” and, uncovering his eyes, he beheld Guerin advancing from behind the tapestry that fell over the door.

“ What now ? Guerin,” cried the King somewhat impatiently. “ What now ? ”

“ My Lord,” replied the Minister, “ I would not have intruded, but that I have just seen a fellow, who brings tidings from the enemy’s camp, of such importance, I judged that you would willingly give ear to it yourself.”

“ Knowest thou the man ? ” demanded Philip : “ I love not spies.”

“ I cannot say, with any certainty, that I have before seen him, Sire,” replied Guerin, “ though I have some remembrance of his face. He says, however, that he was foot-servant to Prince Arthur, who hired him at Tours ; and he gives so clear an account of the taking of

Mirebeau, and the subsequent disasters, that there is little doubt of his tale. He says moreover, that, being taken there with the rest, Lord Salisbury has kept him with him since, to dress one of his horses; till, finding himself so near the royal army, he made his escape like a true man."

"Admit him," said the King: "his tale is a likely one."

Guerin retired for a moment; and then returned, with a bony, powerful man, whose short, cut hair, long beard, and mustachoes, offered so different an appearance to the face of any thing like a Frenchman in those days, that Philip gazed on him with some doubts.

"How, fellow!" cried he; "thou art surely some Polack, no true Frenchman, with thy beard like a hermit's, and thy hair like a hedgehog!"

The man's tongue, however, at once showed that he claimed France for his country justly; and his singular appearance he accounted for,

by saying, it was a whim of the Earl of Salisbury.

“Answer me then,” said the King, looking upon him somewhat sternly. “Where were your tents pitched in the enemy’s camp?—You will find I know their forces as well as you; and if you deceive me, you die.”

“The tents of the Earl of Salisbury are pitched between those of the Count of Holland and the troops of the Emperor, so please you, Sire,” replied the man boldly. “I came to tell the truth, not to deceive you.”

“You have spoken truth in one thing, at least,” replied the Monarch. “One more question,” he continued, looking at some notes on the table,—“one more question, and thou shalt tell thy tale thy own way. What troops lie behind those of the Duke of Brabant, and what are their number?”

“The next tents to those of the Duke of Brabant,” replied the man, “are those of the Duke of Loraine, amounting, they say in the

camp, to nine hundred knights and seven thousand men-at-arms."

"Thou art right in the position, fellow, and nearly right in the number," replied the King, "therefore will I believe thee. Now repeat the news that you gave to that good knight."

"May it please you, Sire," replied the man, with a degree of boldness that amounted almost to affectation, "late last night, a council was held in the tent of the Emperor; and the Earl of Salisbury chose me to hold his horse near the entrance of the tent,—for he is as proud an Englishman as ever buckled on spurs;—and, though all the other princes contented themselves with leaving their horses on the outside of the second guard, he must needs ride to the very door of the tent, and have his horse held there till he came out."

"By my faith! 'tis like their island pride!" said the King. "Each Englishman fancies himself equal to a prince. But proceed with

thy tale, and be quick, for the hour of the council approaches."

" My story is a very short one, Sire," replied the man, " for it was but little I heard. However, after they had spoken within the tent for some time in a low voice, the Emperor's tongue sounded very loud, as if some one had opposed him ; and I heard him say, ' He will march against us, whatever be the peril—I know him well ; and then, at the narrow passage of Damarets we will cut them off to a man, for Sir Guy de Coucy has promised to embarrass their rear with the men of Tankerville ;—and he will keep his word too !' cried the Emperor loudly, as if some one had seemed to doubt it, ' for we have promised him the hand of his lady love, the daughter of Count Julian of the Mount, if we win the victory.' "

" Ha !" cried the King, turning his eyes from the countenance of the informer to that of Guerin,—" ha ! this is treason, indeed ! Said they aught else, fellow, that you heard ?"

"They spoke of there being many traitors in your host, Sire," replied the man; "but they named none else but Sir Guy de Coucy; and just then I heard the Earl of Salisbury speak as if he were walking to the mouth of the tent. 'If Philip discovers his treason,' said he, 'he will cut off his head, and then your plan is nought.' Just as he spoke, he came out, and seeing me stand near the tent, he bade me angrily go farther off, so that I heard no more."

"Have Sir Guy de Coucy to prison!" said the King, turning to Guerin. "By the holy rood! we will follow the good Earl of Salisbury's plan, and have one traitor less in the camp!"

As he heard these words, the eyes of the informer sparkled with a degree of joy, that did not escape the keen observing glance of the King; but, wishing to gain more certain knowledge, he thanked him with condescending dignity for the news he had given, and told him to

wait amongst the sergeants of arms below, till the council should be over, when the chancellor would give him a purse of gold, as a reward for his services. The man with a low reverence retired. “Follow, Guerin,” cried Philip hastily. “Bid some of the sergeants look to him narrowly, but let them treat him well. Lead him to babble, if it be possible. However, on no account let him escape. Have this De Coucy to prison too, though I doubt the tale.”

Guerin turned to obey; but, at that moment, the pages from without, opened the doors of the chamber, giving entrance to the barons who had been called to the council.

A moment of bustle succeeded; and by the time that Guerin could quit the King, the man who had brought the information we have just heard was gone, and no where to be found.

So suspicious a circumstance induced Guerin to refrain from those strong measures against De Coucy which the King had commanded,

till he had communicated with the Monarch on the subject. He sent down, however, to the young Knight's quarters, to require his presence at the castle on business of import ; when the answer returned by his squires was, that De Coucy himself, his squire Hugo de Barre, who had by this time been ransomed by his lord, his page, and a small party of lances, had been absent ever since the encampment had been completed, and no one knew whither they had gone.

Guerin knit his brows ; for he would have staked much upon De Coucy's honour ; but yet, his absence at so critical a moment was difficult to be accounted for. He returned to Philip instantly, and found the council still in deliberation ; some of its members being of opinion that it would be better to march directly forward upon Mortain, and attack the enemy without loss of time ; and others, again, strongly counselling retreat upon Peronne.

Many weighty arguments had been produced on both sides, and at the moment Guerin entered, a degree of silence had taken place previous to the King's pronouncing his final decision. Guerin, however, approached the Monarch, and bending beside him, informed him in a low voice of what he had just heard.

The King listened, knitting his brows and fixing his eyes upon the table, till Guerin had concluded ; then raising his head, and thinking for a moment, without taking any immediate notice of what the Minister had said, he announced his decision on the point before the council.

“ Noble Lords,” said he, “ we have heard and weighed your opinions upon the conduct of the war ; but various circumstances will induce us, in some degree, to modify both, or, rather, to take a medium between them. If we advance upon the enemy at Mortain, we expose ourself to immense disadvantage in the narrow passage by Damarets. This considera-

tion opposes itself on the one hand ; and on the other, it must never be said that Philip of France fled before his enemies, when supported by so many true and faithful peers as we see around us here ;” and the Monarch glanced his eagle eye rapidly from face to face, with a look which, without evincing doubt, gathered at once the expression of each as he spoke. “Our determination therefore is, early to-morrow morning to march, as if towards Lille ; and the next day, wheeling through the open plains of that country, to take the enemy on their flank, before they are aware of our designs. By dawn, therefore, I pray ye, noble Peers, have your men all arrayed beneath your banners, and we will march against our enemy ; who, be assured, whatever fair promises he holds out, is not alone the enemy of Philip, but of every true Frenchman. You are fighting for your hearths and for your homes ; and where is the man, that will not strike boldly in such a quarrel ? For to-night, Lords, adieu !

To-morrow we will meet you with the first ray of the sun."

With these words the council broke up, and the barons took their leave and withdrew ; some well contented with the King's plan, some murmuring that their opinion had not been conceded to, and some perhaps disappointed with a scheme that threatened failure to the very confederacy against which they appeared in arms.

" 'Tis strange, Guerin ! 'tis strange !" cried the King, as soon as his peers were gone. " We have traitors amongst us, I fear !—Yet I will not believe that De Coucy is false. His absence is unaccountable ; but, depend on it, there is some good cause ;—and yet, that groom's tale against him ! 'Tis strange ! I doubt some of the faces, too, that I have seen but now. But I will try them, Guerin—I will try them ; and if they be traitors, they shall damn themselves to hell !"

As the King had commanded, with the first

ray of the sun the host was under arms ; and stretching out in a long line under the walls of Tournay, it offered a gay and splendid sight, with the horizontal beams of the early morning shining bright on a thousand banners, and flashing back from ten thousand lances.

The marshals had scarcely arrayed it five minutes, when the King, followed by his glittering train, issued forth from the castle, mounted on a superb black charger, and armed cap-à-pie. He rode slowly from one end of the line to the other, bowing his plumed helmet in answer to the shouts and acclamations of the troops, and then returned to the very centre of the host. Circling round the crest of his casque were seen the golden fleurs de lis of the crown of France ; and it was remarked, that behind him two of his attendants carried an immense golden wine-cup called a hanap, and a sharp naked sword.

In the centre of the line the King paused, and raised the volant piece of his helmet, when

his face might be seen by every one, calm, proud, and dignified. At a sign from the Monarch, two priests approached, carrying a large silver cruise and a small loaf of bread, which Philip received from their hands ; and, cutting the bread into pieces with the edge of the sword carried by his attendant, he placed the pieces in the chalice, and then poured it full of wine.

“ Barons of France !” cried he, in a loud voice, which made itself heard to an immense distance, — “ Barons of France ! Some foul liar last night sent me word, that there were traitors in my council and rebels in my host. Here I stand before you all, bearing on my casque the crown of France ; and if amongst you there be one man that judges me unworthy to wear that crown, instantly let him separate from my people and depart to my enemies. He shall go free and unscathed, with his arms and followers, on the honour of a King ! But those noble barons who are willing to fight and to die with their Sovereign, in defence of their wives,

their children, their homes, and their country—let them come forward; and in union with their King, eat this consecrated bread, and taste this sacred wine; and cursed be he who shall hereafter forget this sign of unity and fellowship!"

A loud shout from the whole host was the first reply; and then each baron, without an exception, hurried forward before the ranks, and claimed to pledge himself as Philip had proposed.

In the midst of the ceremony, however, a tall strong man in black armour pushed his way through the rest, exclaiming—"Give me the cup! Give me the cup!"

When it was placed in his hands, he raised it first to his head, without lifting the visor of his helmet; but, finding his mistake, he unclasped the volant hurriedly, and throwing it back discovered the wild countenance of Count Thibalt d'Auvergne. He then raised again the cup, and with a quick but not ungraceful movement, bowed low to Philip, and drank some of the wine.

“ Philip King of France, I am your’s till death,” he said, when he had drunk ; and after gazing for a few moments earnestly in the King’s face, he turned his horse and galloped back to a large body of lances a little in the rear of the line.

“ Unhappy man !” said the King; and turning to Guerin, he added—“ Let him be looked to, Guerin. See who is with him.”

On sending to inquire, however, it was replied, that the Count d’Auvergne was there with his vassals and followers, to serve his Sovereign Philip Augustus, in his wars, as a true and faithful liegeman.

Satisfied, therefore, that he was under good and careful guidance, the King turned his thoughts back to other subjects ; and, having briefly thanked his barons for their ready zeal, commanded the army to begin its march upon Lille.

CHAPTER XII.

BETWEEN Mortain and Tournay, in a small road with high banks on either side, the shrubs and flowers of which were covered with a thick coating of dust, rode two of our old acquaintances, on the same morning that the review we have just described took place in the army of the King.

The first, armed in haubergeon and casque, with his haussecol, or gorget, hiding his long beard, and his helmet covering his short cut hair, it was no longer difficult to recognise as Jodelle the Brabançois, whom we last saw in an assumed character before Philip Augustus. By his side, more gaudily costumed than ever,

with a long peacock's feather ornamenting his black cap, rode Gallon the Fool.

Though two persons of such respectability might well have pretended to some attendants, they were alone ; and Jodelle, who seemed in some haste, and not particularly pleased with his companion's society, was pricking on at a sharp pace. But Gallon's mare, on which he was once more mounted, had been trained by himself, and ambled after the Coterel's horse, with a sweet sort of pertinacity from which there was no escaping.

“ Why follow you me, Fool, Devil ? ” cried the Brabançois.—“ Get thee gone ! We shall meet again. Fear not ! I am in haste ; and, my curse upon those idiot Saxons that let you go, when I charged them to keep you, after you hunted me all the way from your camp to our's last night.”

“ Haw, haw ! ” cried Gallon, showing all his white sharp teeth to the very back, as he grinned at Jodelle ; — “ haw, haw ! thou art ungrate-

ful, Sire Jodelle — Haw, haw ! to think of a coterel being ungrateful ! Did not I let thee into all Coucy's secrets two days ago ? Did not I save thy neck from the hangman five months ago ? And now, thou ungrateful hound, thou grudgeth me thy sweet company.—Haw, haw ! I that love thee,—haw, haw, haw ! I that enjoy thy delectable society !—Haw, haw ! Haw, haw ! Haw, haw !” and he rolled and shouted with laughter, as if the very idea of any one loving the Brabançois was sufficient to furnish the whole world with mirth. “ So, thou toldest thy brute Saxons to keep me, or hang me, or burn me alive if they would, last night,—ay, and my bonny mare too ; saying, it was as great devil as myself, Haw, haw ! Maître Jodelle ! They told me all. But they fell in love with my phiz ; and let me go, all for the sweetness of my countenance. Who can resist my wondrous charms ?” and he contorted his features into a form that left them the likeness of nothing human. “ But

I 'll plague thee!" he continued ; " I 'll never leave thee, till I see what thou dost with that packet in thy bosom.—Haw, haw ! I 'll tease thee ! I have plagued the Coucy enough, for a blow he gave me one day.—Haw, haw ! that I have ! Now, methinks, I 'll have done with that, and do him some good service !"

" Thou 'lt never serve him more, Fool !" cried Jodelle, his eyes gleaming with sanguinary satisfaction ; " I have paid him, too, for the blow he gave me—and for more things than that ! His head is off by this time, Juggler ! I heard the order given myself—ay, and I caused that order ! Ha ! canst thou do a feat like that ?"

" Haw, haw ! Haw, haw, haw !" screamed Gallon, wriggling his snout hither and thither, and holding his sides with laughter. " Haw, haw ! thou dolt ! thou ass ! thou block ! thou stump of an old tree ! By the Lord ! thou must be a wit, after all, to invent such a piece of uncommon stupidity.—Haw, haw, haw ! Haw, haw ! Didst thou think, that I would have

furnished thee with a good tale against the Coucy, and given thee means of speech with the Chancellor himself, without taking care to get the cow-killing, hammer-fisted homicide out of the way first?—Haw, haw! thou idiot. Haw, haw, haw!—Lord! what an ass a coterel is!—Haw, haw, haw!”

“ Not such an ass as thou dreamest, Fiend !” muttered Jodelle, setting his teeth close, and almost resolved to aim a blow with his dagger at the Juggler as he rode beside him. But Gallon had always one of his eyes, at least, fixed upon his companion ; and, in truth, Jodelle had seen so much of his extraordinary activity and strength, that he held Gallon in some dread, and scarcely dared to close with him in fair and equal fight. He had smothered his vengeance for long, however, and he had no inclination to delay it much longer, as the worthy Brabançois had more reasons than one for resolving to rid himself of the society of a person so little trustworthy as Gallon, in the most

summary manner possible—but the only question was, how to take him at a disadvantage.

For this purpose, it was necessary to cover every appearance of wrath, that the Juggler might be thrown off his guard. Jodelle smoothed his brow therefore, and, after a moment, affected to join in Gallon's laugh. “Thou art a cunning dealer!” said he—“thou art a cunning dealer, Sir Gallon! But, in troth, I should like to know how thou didst contrive to beguile this De Coucy away from the army, as thou sayest, at such a moment.”

“Haw, haw!” cried Gallon—“haw, haw! ’Twas no hard work. How dost thou catch a sparrow, Sire Jodelle? Is it not by spreading out some crumbs? Well, by the holy rood! as he says himself, I sent him a goose's errand all the way down the river, to reconnoitre a party of men whom I made Ermold, the Page, make Hugo, the Squire, make Coucy, the Knight, believe were going to take the King's host on the flank!—Haw, haw! Oh rare!”

“ By St. Peter ! thou hast betrayed what I told thee when we were drinking two nights since,” cried Jodelle. “ Fool ! thou wilt have my dagger in thee if thou heedest not !”

“ Oh rare !” shouted Gallon, “ Oh rare ! What then, did I tell the Coucy true, when I said Count Julian of the Mount, and William de la Roche Guyon, were there with ten thousand men?—Haw, haw ! did I tell him true, Coterel ? Talk not to me of daggers, lout, or I’ll drive mine in under thy fifth rib, and leave thee as dead as a horse’s bones on a common. —Haw, haw ! I thought the Coucy would have gone down with all the men of Tankerville, and have chined me that fair-faced coward, that once fingered this great monument of my beauty;” and he laid his finger on his long unnatural snout, with so mingled an expression of face, that it was difficult to decide whether he spoke in vanity or mockery. “ But he only went down to reconnoitre,” added the Juggler. “ The great ninny ! he might have swallowed

father and lover up at a mouthful, and then married the heiress if he had liked ! And he calls me fool, too ! Oh rare!—But where art thou going, beau Sire Jodelle ? I saw all your army a-foot before I left them to come after you ; and I dreamed that they were going to cut off the King at the passage by Bovines ; and doubtless thou art bearer of an order to Sir Julian, and Count William, with the Duke of Limburg and the men of Ardennes, to take him in the rear.—Haw, haw ! there will be fine smashing of bones, and hacking of flesh—I must be there to have the picking of the dead men.”

Thus ran on Gallon, rambling from subject to subject, but withal betraying so clear a knowledge of all the plans of the imperial army, that Jodelle believed his information to be little less than magical; though indeed Gallon was indebted for it to strolling amongst the tents of the Germans the night before, and catching here and there, while he amused the knights and squires with his tricks of *jonglerie*, all the rumours

that were afloat concerning the movements of the next day. From these, with a happiness that madness sometimes has, he jumped at conclusions, which many a wiser brain would have missed, and, like a blind man stumbling on a treasure, hit by accident upon the exact truth.

As his conversation with Jodelle arrived at this particular point, the road which they were pursuing, opened out upon a little irregular piece of ground, bisected by another by-path, equally ornamented by high rough banks. Nevertheless, neither of these roads traversed the centre of the little green or common, the one which the travellers were pursuing, skirting along the side, under the sort of cliff by which it was flanked ; and the other edging the opposite extreme. At the intersection of the paths however, on the very top of the farther bank, stood a tall elm tree, which Gallon measured with his eye as they approached.

“ Haw, haw !” cried he, delighting in every recollection that might prove unpleasant to his neighbours.—“ Haw, haw ! Beau Sire Jodelle !

Monstrous like the tree on which they were going to hang you, near the Pont de l'Arche ! —Haw, haw, haw !—The time when you were like to be hanged, and I saved you — you remember ?”

“Thou didst not save me, Fool!” replied the Brabançois ; “’twas King John saved me. I would not owe my life to such a foul fool as thou art, for all that it is worth. The King saved my life, to do a great deed of vengeance, which I will accomplish yet before I die,” added Jodelle, “and then I ’ll account with him too, for what I owe *him*—he shall not be forgot ! no, no !” and the plunderer’s eyes gleamed as he thought of the fate that the faithless Monarch had appointed for him, and connected it with the vague schemes of vengeance that were floating through his own brain.

“Haw, haw !” cried Gallon. “If thou goest not to hell, Sire Jodelle, thou art sure ’twill not be for lack of thanklessness, to back your fair bevy of gentlemanly vices. John, the

gentle, sent thee thy pardon, that thou mightest murder De Coucy for prating of his murdering Arthur,—I know that as well as thou dost; but had my tongue not been quicker than his messenger's horse, thou wouldest soon have been farther on your road to heaven than ever you may be again. Oh rare! How the crows of the *Pont de l'Arche* must hate me!—Haw, haw! vinegar face! didst ever turn milk sour with thy sharp nose?—Hark! Hear you not a distant clatter? Your army is marching down towards the bridge, Prince Pumpkin," he rambled on: "I 'll up into yon tree, and see; for this country is as flat as peas porridge."

So saying, Gallon sprang to the ground, climbed the bank in an instant, and walked up the straight boll of the tree, as easily as if he had been furnished with a ladder; giving a quick glance round, however, every step, to see that Jodelle did not take any advantage of him.

His movements had been so rapid, that with the best intentions thereunto in the world, the

Coterel could not have injured him in his ascent ; and when he was once up, he began to question him on what he saw.

“ What do I see ? ” said Gallon. “ Why, when I look that way, I see German asses, and Lorraine foxes, and English curs, and Flanders mules, all marching down towards the river as quietly as may be ; and when I look the other way, I perceive a whole band of French monkeys, tripping on gaily without seeing the others ; and when I look down there,” he continued, pointing to Jodelle, “ I see a Provençal wolf, hungry for plunder, and thirsty for blood ; ” and Gallon began to descend the tree.

As he had spoken, there was a sound of horses heard coming up the road, and Jodelle spurred close up under the bank, as if to catch a glance of the persons who were approaching ; but, at the same moment, he quietly drew his sword. Gallon instantly perceived his manœuvre, and attempted to spring up the tree once more.

Ere he could do so, however, Jodelle struck at him ; and though he could only reach high enough to wound the tendon of his leg, the pain made the Juggler let go his hold, and he fell to the top of the bank, nearly on a level with the face of the Coterel, who, rising in his stirrups, with the full lunge of his arm, plunged his sword into his body.

Though mortally wounded, Gallon, without word or groan, rolled down the bank, and clung to the legs of his enemy's horse, impeding the motions of the animal as much as if it had been clogged ; while at the same time Jodelle now urged it furiously with the spur ; for the sound of coming cavaliers, and the glance of a knight's pennon from behind the turn of the road, at about an hundred yards' distance, showed him that he must either ride on, or take the risk of the party being inimical to his own.

Three times the horse, plunging furiously under the spur, set its feet full on the body of the unfortunate Juggler ; but still he kept his

hold, without a speech or outcry, till suddenly shouting “ Haw, haw!—Haw, haw, haw!—The Coucy! the Coucy! Haw, haw!” he let go his hold; and the Coterel galloped on at full speed, ascertaining by a single glance, that Gallon’s shout announced nothing but the truth.

De Coucy’s eyes were quick, however; and his horse far fleeter than that of the Coterel. He saw Jodelle and recognised him instantly; while the dying form of Gallon, and the blood that stained the dry white sand of the road, in dark red patches round about, told their own tale; and were not to be mistaken. Without pausing to clasp his visor, or to brace his shield, the Knight snatched his lance from his squire, struck his spurs into the flanks of his charger; and, before Jodelle had reached the other side of the little green, the iron of the spear struck him between the shoulders, and, passing through his plastron as if it had been made of parchment, hurled him from his horse, never to

mount again. A shrill cry like that of a wounded vulture, as the Knight struck him, and a deep groan as he fell to the ground, were the only sounds that the plunderer uttered more. De Coucy tugged at his lance for a moment, endeavouring to shake it free from the body ; but, finding that he could not do so without dismounting, he left it in the hands of his squire, and returned to the spot where Gallon the Fool still lay, surrounded by part of the young Knight's train.

“ Coucy, Coucy !” cried the dying Juggler, in a faint voice, “ Gallon is going on the long journey ! Come hither, and speak to him before he sets out !”

The young Knight put his foot to the ground, and came close up to his wounded follower, who gazed on him with wistful eyes, in which shone the first glance of affection, perhaps, that ever he had bestowed on mortal man.

“ I am sorry to leave thee, Coucy !” said he, “ I am sorry to leave thee, now it comes to this

—I love thee better than I thought.—Give me thy hand.”

De Coucy spoke a few words of kindness to him, and let him take his hand, which he carried feebly to his lips, and licked it like a dying dog.

“ I have spited you very often, Coucy,” said the Juggler; “ and, do you know, I am sorry for it now, for you have been kinder to me than any one else. Will you forgive me?”

“ Yes, my poor Gallon,” replied the Knight: “ I know of no great evil thou hast done; and even if thou hast, I forgive thee from my heart.”

“ Heaven bless thee for it!” said Gallon,
—“ Heaven bless thee for it!—But hark thee, De Coucy! I will do thee one good turn before I die.—Give me some wine out of thy *boutiau*, mad Ermold the Page, and I will tell the Coucy where I have wronged him, and where he may right himself. Give me some wine, quick, for my horse is jogging to the other world.”

Ermold, as he was desired, put the leatheren bottle, which every one travelled with in those days, to the lips of the dying man ; who, after a long draught, proceeded with his confession. We will pass over many a trick which he acknowledged to have played his lord in the Holy Land, at Constantinople, and in Italy, always demanding between each, “ Can you forgive me now ? ” De Coucy’s heart was not one to refuse pardon to a dying man ; and Gallon proceeded to speak of the deceit he had put upon him concerning the lands of the Count de Tankerville. “ It was all false together,” said he. “ The Vidame of Besançon told me to tell you, that his friend, the Count de Tankerville, had sent a charter to be kept in the King’s hands, giving you all his feofs ; and now, when he sees you with the army, commanding the men of Tankerville, the Vidame thinks that you are commanding them by your own right, not out of the good will of the King. Besides, he told me, he did not know

whether your uncle was dead or not; but that Bernard, the Hermit of Vincennes, could inform you."

"But why did you not—" demanded De Coucy.

"Ask me no questions, Coucy," cried Gallon: "I have but little breath left; and that must go to tell you something more important still. From the top of yon tree, I saw the King marching down to the bridge at Bovines; and, without his knowing it, the enemy are marching after him. If he gets half over, he is lost. I heard Henry of Brabant last night say, that they would send a plan of their battle to the Duke of Limburg, Count Julian, and William de la Roche Guyon, whose troops I sent you after, down the river. He said too," proceeded Gallon, growing apparently fainter as he spoke,—"he said too, that it was to be carried by one who well knew the French camp.—Oh, Coucy, my breath fails me. Jodelle, the Coterel—he is the man, I am sure—the papers

are on him.—But, Coucy ! Coucy !” he continued, gasping for breath, and holding the Knight with a sort of convulsive grasp, as he saw him turning to seek the important packet he mentioned,—“ Do not go, Coucy ! do not go to the camp—they think you a traitor.—Oh, how dim my eyes grow !—They will have your head off—don’t go—you’ll be of no use with the head off.—Haw, haw ! haw, haw !” And with a faint effort at his old wild laugh, Gallon the Fool gave one or two sharp shudders, and yielded the spirit, still holding De Coucy tight by the arm.

“ He is gone !” said the Knight, disengaging himself from his grasp. “ Our army marching upon Bovines !” continued he: “ can it be true ? They were not to qu’^t Tournay for two days.—Up, Ermold, into that tree, and see whether you can gain any sight of them. Quick ! for we must spur hard, if it be true.—You, Hugo, search the body of the Coterel.—Quick, Ermold—hold by that branch—there,

your foot on the other ! See you any thing now ?”

With some difficulty, Ermold de Marcy, though an active youth, had climbed half-way up the tree that Gallon had sprung up like a squirrel ; and now, holding round it with both legs and arms, he gazed out over the far prospect. “ I see spears,” cried he,—“ I see spears marching on by the river—and I can see the bridge too !”

“ Are there any men on it ?” cried De Coucy :—“ how far is it from the foremost spears ?”

“ It is clear yet !” replied the Page ; “ but the lances in the van are not half a mile from it ?”

“ Look to the right !—look to the right !” cried the Knight ; “ towards Mortain, what see you ?”

“ I see a clump or two of spears,” replied the youth, “ scattered here and there ; but over one part, that seems a valley, there rises a

cloud ;—it may be the morning mist—it may be dust :—stay, I will climb higher ;” and he contrived to reach two or three branches above. “ Lances, as I live !” cried he: “ I see the steel heads glittering through the cloud of dust, and moving on, just above the place where the hill cuts them. They are rising above the slope—now they dip down again—thousands on thousands—never did I see such a host in Christendom or Paynimry !”

“ Come down, Ermold, and mount !” cried the Knight. “ Two of the servants of arms, take up yon poor fellow’s body !” he continued, “ and bear it to the cottage where we watered our horses but now—then follow towards the bridge with all speed.—Now, Hugo, hast thou the packet ? ’Tis it, by the holy rood !” he added, taking a sealed paper that the squire had found upon Jodelle. “ To horse ! to horse ! We shall reach the King’s host yet, ere the van has passed the bridge. He must fight there or lose all.” And followed by the small body of spears that accompanied him,

Guy de Coucy spurred on at full gallop towards the bridge of Bovines.

The distance might be about four miles; but ere he had ridden one-half of that way, he came suddenly upon a body of about twenty spears, at the top of a slight rise that concealed each party till they were within fifty yards of the other. “Down with your lances!” cried De Coucy; “France! France! A Coucy! a Coucy!” and in an instant the spears of his followers, to the number of about seventy, were levelled in a long straight row.

“France! France!” echoed the other party; and, riding forward, De Coucy was met in mid space by the Chancellor Guerin,—armed at all points, but bearing the coat and cross of a Knight Hospitaller—and Adam Viscount de Melun, who had, together, ridden out from the main body of the army, to ascertain the truth of some vague reports, that the enemy had left Mortain, and was pursuing with all his forces.

“Well met! Sir Guy de Coucy,” said Guerin

" By your cry of France but now, I trust you are no traitor to France, though strange accusations against you reached the King last night; and your absence at a moment of danger countenanced them.—I have order," he added, " to attach you for treason."

" Whosoever calls me traitor, lies in his teeth," replied the Knight rapidly, eager to arrive at the King's host with all speed. " My absence was in the King's service; and as to attaching me for treason, Lord Bishop," he added with a smile, " methinks my seventy lances against your twenty will soon cancel your warrant. I dreamed not that the King would think of marching to-day, being Sunday, or I should have returned before.—But now, my Lord, my errand is to the King himself, and 'tis one also that requires speed. The enemy are following like hounds behind the deer. I have here a plan of their battle. They hope to surprise the King at the passage of the river. He must halt on this side, or all is lost.

From that range of low hills, most likely you will see the enemy advancing.—Farewell."

Guerin, who had never for a moment doubted the young Knight's innocence, did not of course attempt to stay him, and De Coucy once more galloped on at full speed. He soon began to fall in with stragglers from the different bodies of the royal forces : Camp followers, plunderers, skirmishers, pedlars, jugglers, cooks, and all the train of extraneous living lumber attached to an army of the thirteenth century. From these he could gain no certain information of where the King was to be found. Some said he had passed the bridge,—some said he was yet in the rear ; and, finding that they were all as ignorant on the subject as himself, the young Knight sped on ; and passing by several of the thick battalions, which were hurrying on through clouds of July dust, towards the bridge, he demanded of one of the leaders, where was the King.

" I heard but now, that he was in that green

meadow to the right," replied the other Knight ; " and, see !" he added, pointing with his lance, " that may be he, under those ash-trees."

De Coucy turned his eyes in the direction the other pointed, and perceived a group of persons, some on horseback, some on foot, standing round one who, stretched upon the grass, lay resting himself under the shadow of a graceful clump of ash-trees. Close behind him, stood a squire, holding a casque in his hand ; and another, at a little distance, kept in the ardour of a magnificent battle-horse, that, neighing and pawing the grass, seemed eager to join the phalanx that defiled before him.

It was evidently the King who lay there ; and De Coucy, bringing his men to a halt, at the side of the high-road, along which the rest were pressing, troop after troop, towards the bridge, spurred on, followed by his squires, alone, and rode up to the group at once.

Philip Augustus raised his eyes to De Coucy's face as he came up ; and, at a few paces,

the young Knight sprang from his horse, and casting his rein to Hugo de Barre, approached the Monarch.

“ My Lord,” said he earnestly, as soon as he was within hearing, “ I beseech you to order a halt, and command your troops who have passed the bridge, to return. The enemy are not half a mile from you ; and before half the army can pass, you will be attacked on all sides.”

De Coucy spoke rapidly, and the King answered in the same manner. “ Sir Guy de Coucy,” said he, without rising however, “ you are accused to me of treason. Ought I to listen to counsel from a man in that situation ?”

“ My Lord the King,” replied the Knight ; “ God send you many such good *traitors* as I am ! There is the enemy’s plan of attack ;— at least, so I believe, for I have not opened it. You will see by the seal it is from the Duke of Brabant; and by the superscription, that it is to the Duke of Limburg, together with Count

Julian of the Mount, and Count William de La Roche Guyon, his allies. I reconnoitred their forces last night; they amount to fifteen thousand men; and lie three miles down the river."

The King took the paper, and hastily cut the silk with his dagger. "Halt!" cried he, after glancing his eye over it. "Mareuil de Malvoisin, command a halt!—Ho, Guerin!" he cried, seeing the Minister riding quickly towards him. "Have you seen the enemy?"

"They are advancing with all speed, Sire," shouted the Hospitaller as he rode up.—"For God's sake! Sire, call back the troops! They are coming up like the swarms of locusts we have seen in Palestine. Their spears are like corn in August."

"We will reap them!" cried Philip, starting up with a triumphant smile upon his lip,—"we will reap them!—To arms! Warriors, to arms!" and putting his foot in the stirrup, he stood with his hand upon the horse's neck, turning to those about him, and multiplying his orders

with the prompt activity of his keen all-grasping mind. “ The oriflamme has passed the bridge; speed to bring it back, Renault.—Hugo, to the Count of St. Pol! bid him return with all haste.—De Coucy, I did you wrong—forget it, and strike this day as you are wont.—Guerin, array the host as we determined. See that the faithful communes be placed in our own battle, but let Arras and Amiens hold the second line.—Let the barons and the knights stretch out as far as may be ;—remember ! every man’s own lance and shield must be his safeguard.—Eustache, speed to the Count de Beaumont; bid him re-pass the river at the ford, and take his place at the right.—Now, Guerin, hasten ! Let the serjeants of Soissons begin the battle, that the enemy may be broken ere the knights charge.—Away, De Coucy ! Lead Tankerville well, and win the day.—Guillaume de Morte-mar, stay by our person.”

Such were some of the orders given by Philip Augustus: then, springing on his horse, he

received his casque, and, raising the visor, sat in silence gazing upon the field, which was clear and open on all sides, except the road, through which the troops were still seen approaching towards the bridge ; and which, in the other direction, wound away towards Tournay, through some small woods and valleys, that hid the rear guard from view.

In the mean while, Guerin, whose long experience as a Knight Hospitaller qualified him well to marshal the army, hastened to array all the troops that had yet arrived on the plain, taking care to keep the entrance of the bridge free, that the forces which had already passed and were returning upon their steps, might take up their position without confusion and disarray. At that moment, a messenger arrived in breathless haste from the rear of the army, stating that the enemy were already engaged with the light troops of Auxerre, who sustained themselves with difficulty, and demanded help. But even while he spoke, the two bodies en-

gaged, issued forth upon the plain ; and the spears of the whole imperial army began to bristle over the hills.

The trumpets of the French sounded as their enemies appeared ; and it seemed that the Emperor was not a little surprised to find his adversary so well prepared to meet him.

Whether the unexpected sight of so large a body of troops drawn up to oppose them embarrassed the Confederates and deranged their plans, or whether, Philip's first line covering the bridge, they did not perceive that a great part of his forces were still either on the other side of the river, or engaged in repassing it, cannot now be told ; but they took no advantage of so favourable a moment for attack. The body engaged with the rear of Philip's army was called back ; and wheeling to the right of the road by which they came, they took up their position on the slope of the hills to the north of the plain, while Philip eagerly seized the opportunity of displaying his forces on the southern

side, thus having the eyes of his soldiers turned away from the burning sun, that shone full in the faces of the adverse host. An army commanded by many chiefs, is of course never well led ; for what may be gained by consultation, is ever lost by indecision ; and the two great faults thus committed by the Confederates, were probably owing to the uncertainty of their councils.

However that might be, they suffered Philip greatly to recover the unity of his forces, and to take up the best position on the field ; after which succeeded a pause, as if they hesitated to begin the strife, though their's had been the party to follow and to urge their enemy to a battle, and though they had overtaken him at the precise moment which they had themselves planned, and in which an attack must have proved the most disastrous.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR several minutes after the two armies were thus ranged opposite each other, both stood without motion, gazing on the adverse host. The front line was composed almost entirely of cavalry, which formed in those days the great strength of an army, and uniformly decided the event of a battle ; but between the long battalions of the knights and men-at-arms were ranged close bodies of cross-bowmen and archers, who waited but a signal to commence the engagement with their missiles.

Standing thus face to face, with but a narrow space between them, the two hosts seemed as if contemplating the glittering array of the field,

which, if we may believe the “*branch of royal lineages,*” offered on either part as splendid a pageant as ever a royal court exhibited on fête or tournament. “There,” it says in its naif jargon, “you might see many a pleasant coat of arms, and many a neat and gentle device, tissued of gold and various shining colours, blue, vermillion, yellow and green. There were to be seen, serried shields, and neighing horses, and ringing arms, pennons and banners, and helms, and glittering crests.”

To the left of the imperial army appeared Ferrand Count of Flanders, with an immense host of hardy Flemings, together with the Count de Boulogne and several other of the minor confederates ; while, opposed to him was the young Duke of Champagne, the Duke of Burgundy, and the men of the Commune of Soissons. To the right of the imperial army was a small body of English, with the Duke of Brabant and his forces in face of the Comte de Dreux, the Bishop of Beauvais, and a body of the troops of the clergy ; while in the centre

of each host, and conspicuous to both, were Otho, Emperor of Germany, and Philip Augustus of France, commanding in person the chosen knights of either monarchy.

In the midst of the dark square of lances that surrounded the Emperor was to be seen a splendid car, from the centre of which rose a tall pole, bearing on the top the imperial standard, a golden eagle hovering above a dragon; while, beside Philip Augustus, was borne the royal banner of France,* consisting of an azure field embroidered with fleurs de lis of gold. On either hand of the King were ranged the knights selected to attend his person, whom we find named as William des Barres, Barthelmy de Roye, Peter de Malvoisin, Gerard Scropha, Stephen of Longchamp, William of Mortemar, John of Rouvrai, William de Garlande, and Henry Count de Bar, all men distinguished in arms, and chosen for their high and chivalrous qualities.

* A different banner from the famous Oriflamme which was the standard of St. Denis.

A dead silence pervaded the field. Each host, as we have said, gazed upon the other, still, and motionless, waiting in awful expectation the first movement which should begin the horrid scene of carnage about to follow. It wanted but a word—a sign—the levelling of a lance—the sounding of a trumpet, to cast the whole dark mass of blood-thirsty insects there assembled, into strife and mutual destruction: but yet there was a pause; as if each monarch felt the dreadful responsibility which that signal would bring upon his head, and hesitated to give it. Some reflections of the kind certainly passed through the mind of Philip Augustus; for, turning to William de Mortemar, he said, “We must begin the fight—I seek not their blood, but God gives us a right to defend ourselves. They have leagued to crush me, and the carnage of this day be upon their head. Where is the Oriflamme?” he continued, looking round for the consecrated banner of St. Denis.

" It has not yet repassed the river, Sire," replied Gerard Scropha. " I hear the tramp of the Communes still coming over the bridge and filling up the ranks behind. The Ori-flamme was the first banner that passed, and therefore of course will be the last that returns."

" We must not wait for it then," said the King. " Henry de Bar, speed to Guerin, who is on the right, with the Count de St. Paul : bid them begin the battle by throwing in a few men-at-arms to shake that heavy line of the Flemings. Then let the knights charge."

The young Count bowed low, and set spurs to his horse ; but his very passage along the line was a signal for the Confederates to commence the fight. A flight of arrows and quarrels instantly darkened the sky, and fell thick as hail amongst the ranks of the French ; the trumpets sounded, the lances were levelled, and two of the King's chaplains, who were placed at a little distance behind him, began to sing the hundred and forty-third Psalm, while the tears rolled

plentifully from their eyes, from the effects of mingled fear, agitation, and devotion.

In the mean while, an hundred and fifty sergeants of arms charged the whole force of the Count of Flanders, according to the order of the King. His intention was completely fulfilled.* Dropping the points of their lances, the French men-at-arms cast themselves into the midst of the Flemish knights, who, indignant at being attacked by men who had not re-

* Lacurne de St. Palaye was decidedly wrong in attributing the use of the lance solely to knights. Besides the example before given, the present instance of the serjeants of Soissons puts the matter beyond doubt. The words of Guillaume Guiart are—

“Serjanz d’armes cent et cinquante.
Criant Monjoie ! ensemble brochent;
Vers les rens des Flamens descocrent
Les pointes des lances enclines,” &c.

That the serjeants of arms of Soissons were simple burghers is evident from the contempt with which the Flemish knights received them.—*Guil. le Breton, in vit. Phil. Aug.*

ceived the honours of chivalry, fell upon them furiously, with little regard to their own good order.

In an instant, the horses of the French men-at-arms were all slain ; but being men of the commune of Soissons, trained to fight on foot as well as on horseback, they prolonged the fight hand to hand with the enemy's knights, and completely succeeded in throwing the centre of the imperial left wing into disarray. At that moment, the battalion of knights, under the Count de St. Paul, charged in support of the men-at-arms, and with their long lances levelled in line, swept all before them, cleaving through the host of Flemings, and scattering them abroad upon the plain, as a thunderbolt strikes a pine and rends it into atoms.

The strife, thus begun upon the right wing of the royal army, soon communicated itself with the centre ; where, on a small mound, sat Philip Augustus, viewing with a calm observing eye the progress of the battle, though gradually

the dust and steam of the fight, and the confused groups of the combatants, falling every moment into greater disorder, would have confounded a less keen and experienced glance than his.

Though the left was now also engaged, the Monarch's eye principally rested upon the right wing of his forces, where the Count of St. Paul, the Dukes of Burgundy, and Champagne, were still struggling hard with the Flemings, whose second and third line, having come up, had turned the fortune of the day, and were driving back the French towards the river.

“ By the Lord of Heaven ! Burgundy is down ! ” cried Philip.—“ Ho, Michel, gallop to Sir Guy de Coucy ; tell him to charge with the men of Tankerville, to support the good Duke of Burgundy ! Away ! ”

The serjeant to whom he spoke, galloped off like lightning to the spot where De Coucy was placed as a reserve.

“ By Heaven ! the Duke is down, and his

banner too!" continued the King, turning to Guerin, who now had joined him. " De Couey moves not yet. St. Denis to boot! they will turn our flank. Is the Knight coward or mad? —Away, Guerin! Bid him charge for his honour."

But the King saw not what De Coucy saw, that a fresh corps of the Confederates was debouching from the road behind the imperial army. If he attacked the Flemings before this body had advanced, he not only left his own rear unguarded, but the flank of the whole army totally exposed. He paused therefore, notwithstanding the critical situation of the Duke of Burgundy, till such time as this fresh body had, in the hurry and confusion of their arrival, advanced between him and the Flemings.

Then, however, the fifteen hundred lances he commanded were levelled in an instant: the trumpets sounded, the chargers sprang forward, and, hurled like an avalanche against

the flank of this newly arrived corps, the squadron of De Coucy drove them in pell-mell upon the Flemings, forced the Flemings themselves back upon the troops of the Emperor, and left a clear space for the soldiers of Burgundy and Champagne to rally round their chiefs.

“Brave De Coucy!” cried the King, who had marked the manœuvre. “Good Knight! Stout lance! All goes down before him. Burgundy is up. His banner waves again.—Ride, Walter the young, and compliment the Duke for me.—Who are these coming down? I cannot see for the dust.”

“They are the burgesses of Compiègne and Abbeville, and the Oriflamme, Sire,” replied Guillaume des Barres. “They want a taste of the fight, and are forcing themselves in between us and those Saxon serfs, who are advancing straight towards us.”

As he spoke, the men of the communes, eager to signalize themselves in the service of a king who had done so much for them,

marched boldly in to the very front of the battle, and mingled hand to hand with an immense body of German infantry that were approaching rapidly towards the King.

The French communes, however, were inferior to the burly Saxons, both in number and in strength; and were, after an obstinate fight, driven back to the very foot of the mound on which Philip was placed. The knights and men-at-arms who surrounded him, seeing the battle so near the Monarch's person, charged through the ranks of the burgesses, and, mingling with the Saxon infantry, cut them down in all directions with their long heavy swords. The German chivalry again spurred forward to support their own communes; and the fight became general around the immediate person of the Monarch, who remained on the summit of the hillock, with no one but the Count de Montigny, bearing his standard, and Sir Stephen of Longchamp, who had refrained from following the rest into the mêlée.

“ For God’s sake ! Sire, retire a little !” said the Knight : “ if you are hurt, all is lost.”

“ Not a step, for a thousand empires !” replied the King, drawing down his visor and unsheathing his sword, as he beheld three or four German knights spurring towards him at full career, followed by a large troop of footmen, contending with the burghers of Compiègne. “ We must do our devoir as a knight as well as a king, Sir Stephen.”

“ Mine then as a knight !” cried Stephen of Longchamp, laying his lance in rest ; and on he galloped at the foremost of the German knights, whom he hurled dead from his horse, pierced from side to side with the iron of the spear.

The German that followed, however, without spending a blow on the French knight’s casque, plunged his sword in his horse’s chest, at a spot where the iron barding was wanting. Rider and horse went down at once ; and the German, springing to the ground, drew a long

knife from his side, and knelt upon his prostrate adversary's chest.

"Denis Mountjoy!" cried the King, galloping on to the aid of his faithful follower. "Denis Mountjoy! au secours!" But before he could arrive, the German knight had plunged his knife through the bars of the fallen man's helmet; and Stephen Longchamp was no more. The Monarch avenged him however, if he could not save; and, as the Saxon's head was bent down, accomplishing his bloody purpose, he struck him so fierce a blow on the back of his neck, with the full sway of a vigorous and practised arm, that the hood of his mail shirt yielded at once to the blow, and the edge of the weapon drove on through the backbone.

At that moment, however, the King found himself surrounded on every side by the German foot, who hemmed him in with their short pikes. The only knight who was near him was the Count de Montigny, bearing the royal banner; and nothing was to be seen around but the

fierce faces of the Saxon pikemen looking out from under their steel caps, drawing their circle closer and closer round him, and fixing their eager eyes upon the crown that he wore on the crest of his helmet—or else the forms of some German knights at a short distance, whirling about like armed phantoms, through the clouds of dust that enveloped the whole scene.

Still Philip fought with desperate valour; plunging his horse into the ranks of the pike-men; and dealing sweeping blows around with his sword, which four or five times succeeded in clearing the space immediately before him.

Well and nobly too, did the Count de Montigny do his devoir, holding with one hand the royal banner, which he raised and depressed continually, to give notice to all eyes, of the Monarch's danger; and striking with the other on every side round Philip's person, which he thus protected for many minutes from the near approach of his enemies.

It was in vain, however, that the King and

his banner-bearer displayed such feats of chivalrous valour. Closer and closer the German burgesses hemmed them in. Many of the Saxon knights became attracted by the sight of the royal banner, and were urging their horses through the mêlée towards the spot where the conflict was raging so fiercely, when one of the serfs crept close to the King's charger. Philip felt his horse reeling underneath him; and, in a moment, the animal fell to the ground, bearing its rider down along with it.

A hundred of the long, three-edged knives, with which many of the Saxons fought that day, were instantly at the King's throat, and at the bars of his helmet. One thought of Agnes—one brief prayer to Heaven, was all that seemed allowed to Philip Augustus; but that moment, the shout of “Auvergne ! Auvergne !” rang upon his ear and yielded hope.

With his head bent down to his saddle-bow, receiving a thousand blows as he came, his horse all in foam and blood, his armour hacked,

dented, and broken, Thibalt d'Auvergne clove the hostile press with the fierce rapidity of a falcon in its stoop. He checked his horse but by the royal banner ; he sprang to the ground ; dashed, weltering to the earth, the boors who were kneeling on the prostrate body of the King, and, striding over it, whirled his immense mace round his head, at every blow sending the soul of some Saxon on the cold pilgrimage of death. The burgesses reeled back ; but at the same time the knights who had been advancing, hurled themselves upon the Count d'Auvergne, and heaped blow upon blow on his head.

The safety of the whole host—the life and death, or captivity of the King—the destiny of all Europe—perhaps of all the world, depended at that moment on the arm of a madman. But that arm bore it all nobly up ; and, though his armour was actually hewn from his flesh ; and he himself bleeding from an hundred wounds, he wavered not a step ; but, still

striding over the body of the King, as he lay unable to rise, from the weight of his horse resting on his thigh—maintained his ground till knight after knight arriving on both sides, the combat became more equal.

Still the fight around the royal banner was doubtful, when the battle cry of De Coucy was heard approaching. “A Coucy ! A Coucy ! St. Michael ! St. Michael !” rang over the plain ; and the long lances of Tankerville, which had twice completely traversed and retraversed the enemy’s line,* were seen sweeping on, in unbroken masses, like a thunder cloud advancing over the heaven. The regular order they had still preserved, as well as their admirable training, and confidence in their leader, gave them vast superiority. The German pikemen were trampled under their tread. The knights were

* This circumstance, however extraordinary, is not the less true ; and though attributed by the various chroniclers to various persons, is mentioned particularly by all who have described the battle of Bovines.

forced back at the point of the spear; the communes of Compiègne and Abbeville rallied behind them, and, in a short time, the field around the royal banner was once more clear of all enemies.

The first thing was to free the King from the weight of his horse, which had been stabbed in the neck, and was now quite dead. The Monarch rose; but, before he remounted, though there were a thousand horses held ready for him, and a thousand voices pressing him to mount, he exclaimed, “Where is the Count D’Auvergne? I owe him life.—Stand back, Guillaume des Barres! your foot is on his chest. That is he in the black armour?”

It was indeed the unhappy Count d’Auvergne, who had borne up under a multitude of wounds, till the life of the King was in safety. He had then fallen in the mêlée, striking still, and lay upon a heap of dead that his hand had made. By the King’s order, his casque was instantly unlaced; and Philip him-

self, kneeling beside him, raised his head upon his knee, and gazed in the ashy face to see if the flame of life's frail lamp was extinct indeed in the breast of him who had saved him from the tomb.

D'Auvergne opened his eyes, and looked faintly in the face of the Monarch. His lips moved, but no sound issued from them.

"If thou diest, Auvergne," said Philip, in the fulness of his gratitude, "I have lost my best subject."

The Count made another effort to speak. The King stooped over him, and inclined his ear. "Tell her," said the broken accents of the dying man,—"tell her—that for her love—I died—to save your life."

"I will," said Philip Augustus;—"on my faith, I will! and I know her not, or she will weep your fall."

There was something like a faint smile played round the dying Knight's lip; his eyes fixed upon the King, and the spirit that lighted them passed away for ever!

“Farewell, Auvergne!” said the King.—“Des Barres, see his body removed and honoured.—And now, Good Knights,” cried he, springing on horseback, “how fares the fight? My eyes have been absent too long. But by my faith you have worked well while I was down. The enemy’s left is flying, or my sight deceives me.”

“ ’Tis true, my Lord!—’tis true!” replied Guillaume des Barres; and Ferrand of Flanders himself is taken by the Duke of Burgundy.”

“Thank God for that!” cried Philip, and he turned his eyes quickly to the centre. “They seem in strange confusion there.—Where is the Imperial Standard? Where is Otho himself?”

“Otho has to do with Peter of Malvoisin and Gerard the Sow,” replied William des Barres, laughing, “and finds them unpleasant neighbours doubtless. But do you know, Sire, that a pike head is sticking in your cuirass?”

“Mind not that!” cried the King; “Let us charge! Otho’s ranks are broken; his men dispersed; one gallant charge, and the day is ours.

—Down with your lances, De Coucy! — Men of Soissons, follow the King! — Knights, remember your renown! — Burghers, fight for your firesides! — Denis Mountjoy! — Upon them! Charge!"

It was the critical moment. Otho might have rallied; and his forces were still more than double those of the King; while the Count de Boulogne and the English, though the Earl of Salisbury had been dashed from his horse by the mace of the bellicose Bishop of Beauvais, were still maintaining the fight to the left. The well-timed and well-executed charge of the King, however, accompanied, as he was, by the choice chivalry of his realm, who had gathered about him to his rescue, decided the fate of the day. The Germans fled in confusion. Otho himself narrowly escaped being taken; and though a part of the right wing of the Confederates retreated in somewhat better array, yet the defeat even there was complete, and the Earl of Salisbury and the Count de Boulogne were both made prisoners.

For nearly six hours the combat lasted ; and, when at last the flight was complete, the number of prisoners was so great, that Philip dared not allow his troops to pursue the fugitives for any length of way, lest he should be mastered at last by those he had just conquered.

At five o'clock the trumpets sounded to the standard to recall the pursuers ; and thus ended the famous battle of Bovines—a strife and a victory scarcely paralleled in history.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE hurry and confusion of the battle was over ; order was greatly restored ; and the victorious army had encamped on the banks of the river, when Philip Augustus retired to his own tent ; and, after having been disarmed by his attendants, commanded that they should leave him alone for an hour. No one was permitted to approach ; and the Monarch sat down to meditate over the vast and mighty deed he had accomplished.

Oh, what a whirlpool of contending feelings must have been within his bosom at that moment ! Policy, triumph, ambition, hate, revenge, and love, each claimed their place in his heart.

The recollection of the difficulties he had overcome; the fresh memory of the agitating day in which he had overcome them; the glorious prospects yet to come—the past, the present, and the future, raised their voices together, and, with a sound like thunder, called to him, “Rejoice!”

But Philip Augustus sat with his hands clasped over his eyes, in deep and even melancholy thought. A feeling of his mortality mingled, he knew not why or how, even with the exultation of his victory. To his mind’s eye, a shadow, as if from the tomb, was cast over the banner of his triumph. A feeling of man’s transitory littleness,—a yearning after some more substantial glory, chastened the pride of the conqueror; and, bending the knee before Heaven’s throne, he prayed fervently to the Giver of all victory.

After long, deep thought, he recalled his attendants; received several messengers that had come on from Lille; and, ordering the hangings

of his tent to be drawn up, he commanded the various chieftains who had distinguished themselves in that day's conflict, to be called around him.

It was a beautiful summer evening; and the rays of the declining sun shone over the field of battle, into the tent of the victor, as he sat surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, receiving the greatest and noblest of his land. For each he had some gratulatory word, some mention of their deeds, some praise of their exertions; and there was a tempered moderation in his smile, a calm grave dignity of aspect, that relieved his greater barons from the fears which even they, who had aided to win it, could not help feeling, respecting the height to which such a victory might carry his ambition. There was not a touch of pride in his deportment—no, not even of the humility with which pride is sometimes fond to deck itself. It was evident that he knew he had won a great battle, and rejoiced: —that he had vanquished his enemies—that he

had conquered a confederated world ;—but yet he never felt himself more mortal, or less fancied himself kindred to a god. He had triumphed in anticipation — the arrogance of victory had exhausted itself in expectation ; and he found it not so great a thing to have overcome an universe as he had expected.

“ Thanks, brave Burgundy ! thanks !” cried he, grasping the hand of the Duke, as he approached him. “ We have won a great triumph ; and Burgundy has fully done his part. —By my faith ! Lord Bishop of Beauvais, thy mace is as good a weapon as thy crosier. I trust thou mayst often find texts in Scripture to justify thy so smiting the King’s enemies.”

“ I spill no blood, Sire,” replied the warlike Bishop : “ to knock on the head, is not to spill blood, let it be remarked.”

“ We have, at all events, with thine aid, my Lord of Beauvais,” said the King, smiling at the Prelate’s nice distinction,—“ we have, at all events, knocked on the head a great and foul

confederation against our peace and liberties.—Ha! my young Lord of Champagne! Valiantly hast thou won thy knighthood.—Guillaume des Barres, thou art a better knight than any of the round table; and to mend thy cellarage, I give thee five hundred acres in my valley of Soissons.—And Pierre de Dreux too, art thou, for once in thy life, satisfied with hard blows?—De Coucy, my noble De Coucy! to whom I did some wrong before the battle. As thou hast said thyself, De Coucy, God send me ever such traitors as thou art! However, I have news for thee, will make thee amends for one hard word.—Welcome, St. Valery!—as welcome as when you came to my succour this fair morning.—Now, Lords, we will see the prisoners—not to triumph over them, but that they may know their fate.”

According to the King’s commands, the several prisoners of high rank, who had been taken that morning, were now brought before him; a part of the ceremony to which even his own

barons looked with some doubt and anxiety as well as the captives themselves ; for, amongst those who had fought on the other side, were many who were not only traitors to the King, inasmuch as violating their oath of homage rendered them so—but traitors under circumstances of high aggravation, after repeated pardon and many a personal favour ; yet who were also linked, by the nearest ties of kindred, to those in whose presence they now stood as prisoners. The first that appeared was the Earl of Salisbury, who, in the fear caused by the number of prisoners, had been bound with strong cords, and was still in that condition when brought before the King.

“ I am sorry to see you here, William of Salisbury,” said Philip frankly. “ But why those cords upon your hands ? Who has dared, so unworthily, to bind a noble Knight ? Off with them ! quick ! Will you not yield yourself a true prisoner ? ”

“ With all my heart, Sir King,” replied the

Earl, “since I may no better. The knaves tied me, I fancy, lest the prisoners should eat up their conquerors. But, by my faith! had the cowardly scum who have run from the field, but fought like even your gownsmen, we should have won few prisoners, but some glory.”

“For form’s sake! we must have some one to be hostage for your faith,” said the King, “and then, good Knight, you shall have as much liberty as a prisoner may.—Who will be William of Salisbury’s surety?”

“That will I,” said De Coucy, stepping forward. “In life and lands, though I have but little of the last.”

“Thank thee, old friend,” said the Earl, grasping his hand. “We fought in different parts of the field, or we would have tried some of our old blows: but ‘tis well as it is, though ’twas a Bishop, they tell me, knocked me on the head. I saw him not, in faith, or I would have split his mitre for his pains.”

Prisoner after prisoner was now brought before

the King, to most of whom he spoke in a tone to allay their fears. On Ferrand of Flanders, however, he bent his brows, strongly moved with indignation, when he remembered the presumptuous vaunting of that vain light prince, who had boasted that, within a month, he would ride triumphant into Paris.

“ Now, rebellious vassal,” said the Monarch with severe dignity of aspect. “ What fate does thy treason deserve? Snake, thou hast stung us for fostering thee in our bosom, and the pleasures of Paris, shown to thee in the hospitality of our court, have made thee covet the heritage of thy Lord. As thou hast boasted, so shall it befall thee; and thou shalt ride in triumph into our capital; but, by Heaven’s Queen! it shall not be to sport with jugglers and courtezans!”

Ferrand turned deadly pale, in his already excited fears, misconstruing the King’s words. “ I hope, my Lord,” said he, “ that you will think well before you strike at my life. Re-

member, I am but your vassal for these lands of Flanders, in right of my wife—that I am the son of an independent monarch, and my life may not—”

“ Thy life!” cried Philip, his lip curling with scorn.—“ Fear not for thy pitiful life! Get thee gone! I butcher not my prisoners; but, by the Lord! I will take good care that ye rebel not again!—Now, Renault of Boulogne,” he continued, turning to the gigantic Count of Boulogne, who, of all the Confederates, had fought the longest and most desperately, entertaining no hope of life if taken, both from being one of the chief instigators of the Confederacy, and from many an old score of rebellion not yet wiped off between himself and the King. He appeared before the Monarch, however, with a frank smile upon his jovial countenance, as if prepared to endure with good humour the worst that could befal; and seeing that, as a kind of trophy, one of the pages bore in his enormous casque, on the crest of which he had

worn two of the broad blades of whalebone, near six feet high, he turned laughing to those around, while the King spoke to Ferrand of Flanders—"Good faith," said he, "I thought myself a leviathan, but they have managed to catch me notwithstanding."

"Now, Renault of Boulogne," said the King sternly,—"how often have I pardoned thee—canst thou tell?"

"Faith, my Lord!" replied the Count, "I never was good at reckoning; but this I do know, that you have granted me my life oftener than I either deserved or expected, though I cannot calculate justly how often."

"When you do calculate then," said Philip, "add another time to the list; but, remember, by the bones of all the saints! it is the last!"

"Faith! my Lord, you shall not break their bones for me," replied the Count. "For I have made a resolution to be your good vassal for the future; and, as my good friend Count Julian of the Mount says, my resolutions are as immovable as the centre."

“ Ha, Count Julian !” said the King. “ You are welcome, fair Count ; and, by Heaven, we have a mind to deal hardly with you. You have been a comer and goer, Sir, in all these errands. You have been one of the chief stirrers-up of my vassals against me ; and, by the Lord ! if block and axe were ever well won, you have worked for them. However, here stands Sir Guy de Coucy, true Knight, and the King’s friend ; give him the hand of your daughter, his lady-love, and you save your head upon your shoulders.”

“ My Lord, it cannot be,” replied old Sir Julian stoutly. “ I have already given the Knight his answer. What I have said, is said —my resolutions are as immovable as the centre, and I’d sooner encounter the axe than break them.”

“ Then, by Heaven ! the axe shall be your doom !” cried Philip, giving way to one of his quick bursts of passion, at the bold and obstinate tone in which his rebellious vassal dared to address him. “ Away with him to the block !

and know, old mover of rebellions, that your lands and lordships, and your daughter's hand, I, as your Sovereign Lord, will give to this brave Knight, after you have suffered the punishment of your treason and your obstinacy."

Sir Julian's cheek turned somewhat pale, and his eye twinkled; but he merely bit his lip; and, firm in his impenetrable obstinacy, offered no word to turn aside the Monarch's wrath. De Coucy, however, stepped forward, and prayed the King, as Sir Julian had been taken by his own men, to give him over to him, when he doubted not he would be able to bring him to reason.

"Take him then, De Coucy," said Philip; "I give you power to make what terms with him you like; but before he quits this presence, he consents to his daughter's marriage with you, or he quits it for the block. Let us hear how you will convert him."

"What I have said, is said!" muttered Sir Julian,—"my resolutions are as immovable as the centre!"

“Sir Julian,” said De Coucy, standing forward before the circle, while the prisoner made up his face to a look of sturdy obstinacy, that would have done honour to an old, well seasoned mule, “you told me once, that I might claim your daughter’s hand, if ever—Guillaume de la Roche Guyon, to whom you had promised her, being dead,—you should be fairly my prisoner, and I could measure acre for acre with your land. Now, I have to tell you, that William de la Roche fell on yonder plain, pierced from the back to the front by one of the lances of Tankerville, as he was flying from the field. You are, by the King’s bounty and my good fortune, my true and lawful prisoner; and surely the power of saving your life, and giving you freedom, may be reckoned against wealth and land.”

“No, no!” said Sir Julian. “What I have said—”

But he was interrupted by the King, who had recovered from the first heat into which Sir Julian’s obstinacy had cast him, and was now

rather amused than otherwise, with the scene before him. “Hold, Count Julian!” cried he, “Do not make any objection yet. The only difficulty is about the lands, it seems—that we will soon remove.”

“Oh, that alters the case,” cried Count Julian, not sorry in his heart to be relieved from the painful necessity of maintaining his resolution at the risk of his life. “If you, Sire, in your bounty, choose to make him my equal in wealth—William de la Roche Guyon being dead, and I being his prisoner,—all the conditions will be fulfilled, and he shall have my daughter. What I have said is as firm as fate.”

“Well then,” replied the King, glancing his eye towards the Barons, who stood round, smiling at the old Knight’s mania, “we will not only make De Coucy your equal in wealth, Sir Julian, but far your superior.—A Court of Peers, Lords!—a Court of Peers! Let my Peers stand round.”

Such of the spectators as were by right Peers

of France, advanced a step from the other persons of the circle, and the King proceeded.

“ Count Julian of the Mount !” said he in a stern voice, “ We, Philip the Second, King of France, with the aid and counsel of our Peers, do pronounce you guilty of *leze majesté*; and do declare all your feofs, lands and lordships, wealth, furniture, and jewels, forfeited and confiscate to the crown of France, to use and dispose thereof, as shall be deemed expedient !”

“ A judgment ! a judgment !” cried the Peers, while the countenance of poor Count Julian fell a thousand degrees.—“ Now, Sir,” continued the King, “ without a foot of land in Europe, and without a besant to bless yourself,—William de la Roche Guyon being dead, and you that good knight’s prisoner,— We call upon you to fulfil your word to him, and consent to his marriage with your daughter, Isadore, on pain of being held false and mansworn, as well as stubborn and mulish.”

“ What I have said is said !” replied Count

Julian, putting forth his wonted proposition in a very crest-fallen tone. “ My resolutions are always as firm as the centre.—De Coucy, I promised her to you, under such circumstances. They are fulfilled, and she is your’s—though it is hard that I must marry my daughter to a beggar.”

“ Beggar, Sir !” cried the King, his brow darkening again ; “ let me tell you, that though rich enough in worth and valour alone to match the daughter of a prince, Sir Guy de Coucy, as he stands there, possesses double in lands and lordships what you have ever possessed.—De Coucy, it is true : the lands and lordships of Tankerville, and all those fair domains upon the banks of the broad Rhone, possessed by the Count of Tankerville, who wedded your father’s sister, are now your’s, by a charter in our royal treasury, made under his hand, some ten years ago, and warranted by our consent. We have ourself, pressed by the necessities of the state, taken for the last year the revenue

of those lands, purposing to make restitution—to you, if it should appear that the Count was really dead—to him, if he returned from Palestine, whither he was said to have gone. But we find ourself justified by an unexpected event. We acted in this, by the counsel of the wise and excellent Hermit of Vincennes, now a Saint in God's Paradise: and we have just learned, that the Count de Tankerville himself it was who died ten days ago in the person of that same Bernard, the anchorite of Vincennes. He had lived there in that holy disguise for many years; and it was so long since we had seen him, the change in his person, by fasts and macerations, was so great, and his appearance as a hermit altogether so different from what it was as the splendid Count of Tankerville, that, though not liable to forget the faces we have seen, in his case we were totally deceived. On his deathbed he wrote to us this letter, full of pious instruction and good counsel. At the same time,

he makes us the unnecessary prayer of loving and protecting you. You, therefore, wed the proud old man's daughter, far his superior in every gift of fortune; and, as some punishment to his vanity and stubbornness, we endow you and your heirs with all those feofs that he has justly forfeited, leaving you to make what provision for his age you yourself may think fit."

Count Julian hung his head; but here let it be said, that he had never any cause to regret that the King had cast his fortunes into such a hand; for De Coucy was one of those whose hearts, nobly formed, expand rather than contract under the sunshine of fortune.

CHAPTER XV.

SIX days had elapsed after the scenes we have described in our two last chapters, and Philip Augustus had taken all measures to secure the fruits of his victory, when, at the head of a gay party of knights and attendants, no longer burdened with warlike armour, but garmented in the light and easy robes of peace, the conquering Monarch spurred along the banks of the Oise, anxious to make Agnes a sharer of his joy, and to tell her that, though the crafty policy of Rome still prolonged the question of his divorce, he was now armed with power to dictate what terms he pleased, and to bring her enemies to her feet.

The six months had now more than expired, during which he had consented not to see her; and that absence had given to his love all that magic light with which memory invests past happiness. The brightest delight too of hope was added to his feelings,—the hope of seeing joy reblossom on the cheek of her he loved, and the inspiration of the noblest purpose that can wing human endeavour carried him on,—the purpose of raising, and comforting, and bestowing happiness.

It may easily be believed then, that the Monarch was in one of his gayest and most glad-some moods ; and to De Coucy, who rode by his side, full of as high hopes and glad anticipations as himself, he ever and anon poured forth some of the bright feelings that were swelling in his bosom.

The young Knight too—hurrying on towards the castle of Rolleboise, where Isadore, now his own, won by knightly deeds and honourable effort, still remained, uncertain of her fate—

gave way once more to the natural liveliness of his disposition; and living in an age when Ceremony had not drawn her rigid barrier between the Monarch and his vassal, suffered the high spirits, which for many months had been as it were chained down by circumstance, to shine out in many a quick sally and cheerful reply.

The death of his companion in arms, the unhappy Count D'Auvergne, would indeed throw an occasional shade over De Coucy's mind. But the regrets which we in the present age experience for the loss of a friend in such a manner—and which De Coucy was formed to feel as keenly as any one—in that age met with many alleviations. He had died knightly in his harness, defending his monarch; he had fallen upon a whole pile of enemies his hand had slain; he had wrought high deeds, and won immortal renown. In the eyes of De Coucy, such a death was to be envied; and thus, though when he thought of never beholding his

friend again, he felt a touch of natural grief for his own sake ; yet, as he remembered the manner of his fate, he felt proud that his friend had so finished his career.

It was a bright July morning, and would have been extremely hot, had not an occasional cloud skimmed over the sky, and cast a cool though fleeting shadow upon the earth. One of these had just passed, and had let fall a few large drops of rain upon them in its course, the glossy stains of which on his black charger's neck, Philip was examining with the sweet idleness of happiness, when De Coucy called his attention to a pigeon flying overhead.

"A carrier pigeon, as I live ! my Lord !" said the Knight. "I have seen them often in Palestine. "Look ! there is its roll of paper !"

"Has any one a falcon ?" cried the King, apparently more agitated than De Coucy expected to see, on so simple an event. "I would give a thousand besants for a falcon !"

One of the King's pages, in the train, car-

ried, as was common in those days even during long journeys, a falcon on his wrist ; and, hearing the Monarch's exclamation, he, in a moment, unhooded his bird, and slipped its gesses. Lifting its keen eyes towards the sky, the hawk spread its wings at once, and towered after the pigeon.

" Well flown, good youth !" cried the King. " What is thy name ?" — " My name is Hubert," replied the boy, somewhat abashed — " my name is Hubert, beau Sire."

" Hubert ? What, nothing else ? Henceforth, then, be Hubert de Fauconpret ;" and having sportively given this name to the youth — a name which descended distinguished to after years, he turned his eyes towards the falcon, and watched its progress through the sky. " The bird will miss his stroke, I fear me," said the King, turning towards De Coucy ; and then, seeing some surprise at his anxiety painted on the young Knight's countenance, he added — " That pigeon is from Rolleboise. I

brought the breed from Ascalon. Agnes would not have loosed it without some weighty cause!"

As he spoke, the falcon towered above the pigeon, struck it, and at a whistle brought it trembling and half dead with fear to the Page, who instantly delivered it from the clutches of its winged enemy, and gave it into the hands of the King. Philip took the scrap of paper from the poor bird's neck, caressed it for a moment, and then again threw it up into the air. At first, it seemed as if it would have fallen, from the fear which it had undergone, though the well-trained falcon had not injured it in the least. After a few faint whirls, however, it gained strength again, rose in a perpendicular line into the sky, took two or three circles in the air, and then darted off at once directly towards Paris.

In the meanwhile, Philip Augustus gazed upon the paper he had thus received; and, whatever were the contents, they took the colour from his cheek. Without a word, he

struck his horse violently with his spurs, urged him into the gallop; and followed by his train as best they might, drew not in his rein till he stood before the barbican of the castle of Rolleboise.

Pale cheeks and anxious eyes encountered his glance, as he dashed over the drawbridge the moment it was lowered. “The Queen?” cried he,—“the Queen? How fares the Queen?” But, without waiting for reply, he sprang to the ground in the court—rushed past the crowd of attendants, through the hall, up the staircase, and paused not, till he reached the door of that chamber which he and Agnes had inhabited during the first months of their union; and in which, from its happy memories, he knew she would be fond to dwell. There, however, he stopped, the beating of his heart seeming almost to menace him with destruction if he took a step farther.

There was a murmur of voices within; and after an instant’s pause, he opened the door,

and, gliding past the tapestry, stood at the end of the room.

The chamber was dim, for the night was near; but at the farther extremity was the faint light of a taper contending with the pale remains of day. He could see, however, that his marriage-bed was arrayed like the couch of the dying—that there were priests standing round in silence, and women in tears; while one lovely girl, whose face he knew not, knelt by the bed-side, and supported on her arm the pale and ashy countenance of another, over which the grey shadow of death seemed advancing fast.

Philip started forward. Could that be Agnes — that pale blighted thing, over whose dim and glassy eyes a strange unlife-like film was drawn — the precursor of the shroud? Could that be Agnes — the bright—the beautiful—the beloved?"

A faint exclamation, which broke from the attendants as they beheld him, reached even

the heavy ear of the dying. The film was drawn back from her eyes for a moment ; life blazed up once more, and concentrated all its parting light in the full, glad, ecstatic gaze which she fixed upon the countenance of him she loved. A smile of welcome and farewell hung upon her lip ; and, with a last effort, she stretched forth her arms towards him. With bitter tears, Philip clasped her to his bosom. Agnes bent down her head upon his neck and died !

Oh, glory ! oh, victory ! oh, power ! Ye shining emptinesses ! Ye bubbles on the stream of time !

THE END.

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